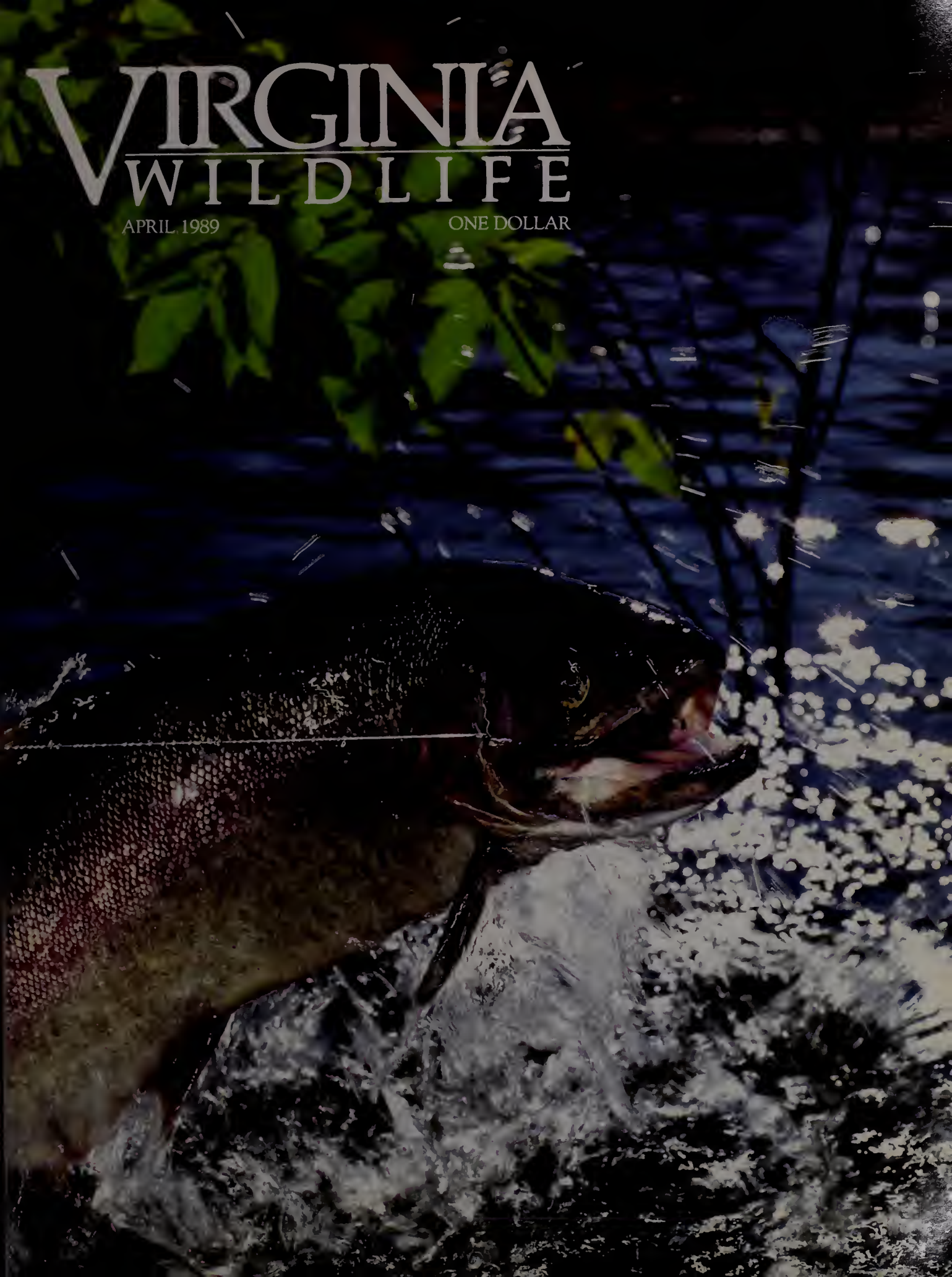


VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

APRIL 1989

ONE DOLLAR



If strong responses are needed and yet there is some residual uncertainty about whether you are going to have to make those responses, the natural psychological tendency is to magnify the uncertainty and say, "Well, maybe we won't really have to face up to it."—Senator Albert Gore, *Time*, January 2, 1989.

Senator Albert Gore of Tennessee was talking about why we can't seem to take political action on tough environmental issues which clearly demand action when he wrote those words. Truly, courage and sacrifice aren't much in vogue these days.

Perhaps we've pursued the good life too long. As Stewart Udall said 26 years ago in his recently reissued book, *The Quiet Crisis*, "We are better housed, better nourished, and better entertained, but we are not better prepared to inherit the earth or to carry on the pursuit of happiness."

We have gone soft. We're no longer compelled to make strong responses, because we can easily get away with soft ones. If someone is loafing on the job, we want to look the other way instead of confronting the disagreeable. If development inches slowly out into our little-known counties, we shrug our shoulders and say that we can't stop progress.

As Albert Gore observed, we magnify the uncertainty that something evil, something irreversibly bad will ever come of incompetence, ineptitude, poor planning or bad judgement. So we delay, we make excuses, we forget, we shift the blame.

We have the frightening ability to rationalize any action we take, be it good or bad. And, too often, this capability allows us to get out of the situations we ought to be sticking out and battling in. Rather than standing firm and taking a few punches, we duck down back alleys to save our illusions and the security in our lives.

Recently I've had the notion to reread one of Edgar Allen Poe's short stories, "The Masque of the Red Death." I've never been very fond of Poe, which is probably a mistake to admit publicly about one of Virginia's favorite sons, but frankly, his nightmarish horror stories give me the shakes. Still, that story haunts me. Do you remember how it begins?

The 'Red Death' had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal or so hideous . . . But the Prince Prospero was happy and dauntless and sagacious. When his dominions were half depopulated, he summoned to his presence a thousand hale and light-hearted friends . . . and with these retired to the deep seclusion of one of his castellated abbeys . . .

The external world could take care of itself. In the meantime it was folly to grieve, or to think. The prince had provided all the appliances of pleasure. There were buffoons, there were improvisatori, there were ballet-dancers, there were musicians, there were cards, there was Beauty, there was wine. All these and security were within. Without was the 'Red Death.'

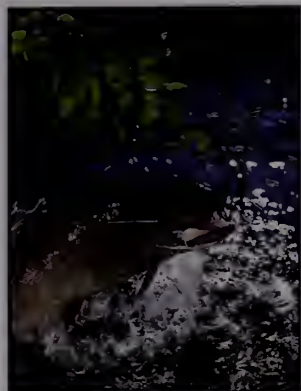
Of course, one finds out by the end of the story that the external world cannot be escaped, and the 'Red Death' comes "like a thief in the night" to shatter the secure illusions of the Prince and his courtiers.

As prophetic as this story seems, critics have had a hard time with it. They've either dismissed it as incomprehensible or meaningless. Some have simply dubbed it the art of a madman. I had to grin while reading one critic's frustration with the work: "Since Prince Prospero and his courtiers can do nothing to combat the disease, what is so immoral in their fleeing it?"

The message seems so utterly clear. It has something to do with soft responses in the face of dangers as horrific and elusive as the masked 'Red Death' of the story. It has to do with problems which may elude simple definition and solution, but which are deadly to all.

Poe offers the reader no road to salvation in his nightmare, no right way to proceed. The path to destruction, however, he makes chillingly clear, as the ebony clock in the westernmost room of his story slowly counted down the hours left for the living.—Virginia Shepherd





Cover

Rainbow trout; photo by Doug Stamm

Back cover: Pink ladyslipper; photo by John M. Coffman.

4 Rollcast to a Smallmouth

by Bruce Ingram

Bass aren't the exclusive domain of bass boats and spinning outfits. Flyfishermen can catch just as many fine smallmouths as the big boys can. Bruce Ingram tells you how.

8 Building a Home for Bobwhites

by Chris Wheaton

Bobwhites need a certain type of habitat to survive and flourish. Department wildlife biologist Chris Wheaton details how you can make conditions on your land right for quail.

13 Surveying the Season by Gary Norman

For the past two spring gobbler seasons, the Virginia Game Department and the Wild Turkey Federation have been questioning turkey hunters about their success in the field in order to aid wild turkey management efforts. The results of the survey can also give this year's spring hunter an edge.

17 Lake Robertson—A Profile

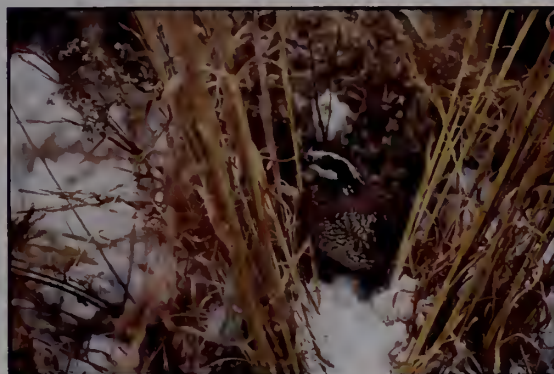
by Carl "Spike" Knuth

A profile of a public fishing lake managed by your Virginia Game Department.

20 Confessions of a Pond Fisherman

by Steve Ausband

It's not such a bad idea to make a detour on your big lake fishing trip this year—to the first pond you come to.



24 The Brown: A Trout for all Philosophies

by Bob Gooch

Some call him the king of trout in Virginia. Bob Gooch tells you where to find him, how to fish for him, and what your chances are of catching him!

29 April Journal: Family outdoors, boating safety, letters, citation program update, etc.

34 Virginia's Wildlife The Tick

by Nancy Hugo



Rollcast to a Smallmouth

Bass aren't the exclusive domain of bass boats and spinning outfits.

Flyfishermen can catch just as many fine smallmouths as the big boys can. Bruce Ingram tells you how.

story & photos by Bruce Ingram

The best thing about flyfishing for Virginia's smallmouth bass, as compared to using a long rod for the state's trout, is that you don't have to be outstanding at casting or well versed in the life cycles of various aquatic insects. Although stream smallies can be at times notoriously difficult to outwit, generally they are more forgiving of our errors than the brooks, the browns, and the 'bows. And though there are times when live bait or lures will prove to be the best ways to catch bass, there are also occasions when flies will outperform anything tossed.



An example of this fact occurred several years ago when Noel Burkhead, coauthor of the soon to be published *Freshwater Fishes of Virginia*, and I made a trek to the New River. The ground rules were that Burkhead would use only his fly rod while I employed my favorite spinning outfit. In short, he landed close to 40 bronzebacks while I caught only a half dozen or so. All of his fish were caught on one fly, one that he uses consistently to fool large numbers of mossybacks.

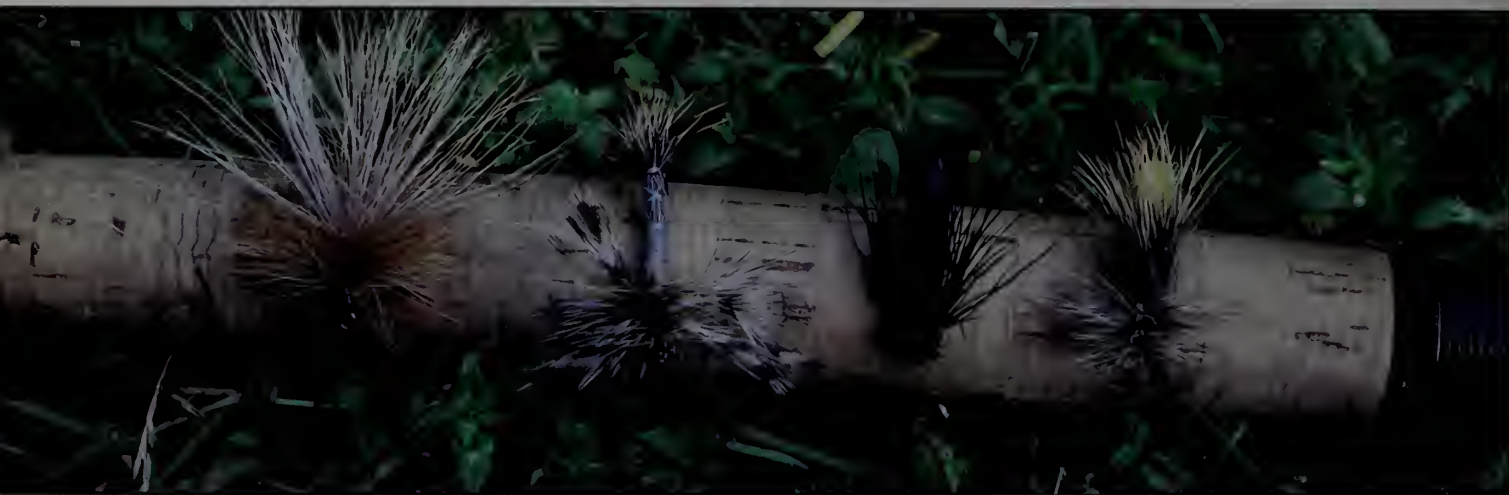
"A Sneaky Pete popper in chartreuse is the best fly that I have ever

then go and make another splat a few yards away from your original cast. That's all there is to it."

During the summer months, a prime way to work a Sneaky Pete popper—or any kind of popper—is to toss it under tree limbs that create shade over riffle and pool areas. On the New River trip, Burkhead employed this game plan time after time with every shaded spot holding a bass or two. Of course, this approach is not the only way to outduel bronzebacks. Poppers will also work well anywhere there is a little patch of still water such as eddies

ets, frogs, mice, or grasshoppers. In the late summer, anything that imitates a cricket or hopper will really excite the fish. The deer hair flies, like the cork poppers, also give you the thrill of a surface strike.

"The third type of fly that I have a whole lot of faith in is a wooly bugger, either in black or chartreuse. Using a subsurface fly like the bugger takes a great deal of practice, and even a good fisherman may miss 60 to 70 percent of the hits he receives. But a wooly bugger attracts so many bass that you can still catch quite a few fish on it.



found for catching sheer numbers of stream bass," said Burkhead. "For the life of me I can't tell you why. I have done a lot of experimenting with a whole lot of flies, but I always come back to the Sneaky Pete. It really doesn't look like anything that the bass feed on, and there is for sure nothing in their diet that is chartreuse colored. Yet, that color will outperform all of the others that I have tried.

"Another strange thing about this popper is the way you cast it. You just throw it out and let it *splat*. Anybody can do that, even someone who has never flyfished. Something about that splatting noise seems to indicate that some creature is very vulnerable, and the bass just come up and cream the popper. Some people say that you have to let a popper sit for a long time, but that's not true with the Sneaky Pete. Throw it out, make a splat, wait five seconds or so, pick up your line,

and current breaks.

Curtis Worrell, a fellow flyfisherman from Salem, agrees with Noel Burkhead that poppers are a super smallmouth getter.

"From spring through fall, a cork popper is probably my favorite fly," said Worrell. "They are so simple and uncomplicated to use. Another reason I like a popper is that it is so easy to see. It's really a thrill when a bass comes up and smashes it.

"Sizes two and four work best for me, and my favorite colors are red/white and oranges. Another thing that's good about poppers is that you can tie them yourself. I get a lot of satisfaction creating my own; they don't have to be really pretty to work."

Besides poppers, Worrell relies on two other flies for stream bronzebacks.

"Another really good surface fly is one made from deer hair. The one that I tie imitates either bumblebees, crick-

"A good way to fish the flies that I have mentioned is to work the cork poppers and deer hair flies in the eddies and pools and the wooly buggers in the faster water such as riffles. I like to give my surface flies a lot of 'twist,' sort of gurgles them along. With the buggers, the main thing is to keep slack out of your line so that you can feel the strike."

Worrell rates the James River as his favorite place to flyfish, saying that it has been his favorite destination for both numbers and size of mossybacks. Although the Salem resident enjoys canoeing the river, he believes the best manner to work it is to either wade or beach your canoe when likely spots are encountered. He also has tips on what kind of rod and line to use.

"I prefer a forward tapered six-weight line on a nine-foot graphite rod," he said. "Admittedly, this outfit might be a little light for most people;

typically, bass fishermen like an eight-weight line with an eight-and-a-half or nine-foot rod. The latter outfit would probably do better with the heavier flies than mine would. However, my outfit can be used for both bass and trout fishing. It's not the classic approach, but it is an inexpensive way to go. And mine is also good for getting flies out a good distance.

"For a leader, I go with a six-foot tapered one that has a tip strength of about eight pounds. Again, this is not your standard length leader, but because it is short, this leader is very

playing in their ballpark and trying to figure out what kind of groceries they want today."

Barlow, who is also an assistant principal at Patrick Henry High School in Roanoke, relates that a newcomer to the pastime really need learn only two kinds of casts.

"The rollcast is the first that many learn and it is very simple to master," he said. It is a superb cast for a cramped area. For example, if you are working a small stream for smallmouths and there is a lot of cover about in the form of overhanging

learn how to do," said Barlow. "The crucial point is to have a balanced outfit; most people run into problems when they purchase a line that doesn't match their reel or they buy their outfit in bits and pieces.

"I like many of the new graphite rods for stream bass fishing, especially ones that are eight-weight rods. I suggest that a newcomer to the sport also buy one floating tip line and one intermediate sinking tip. The former can be used for poppers and surface flies, and the latter can be used to get minnow and nymph imitations deeper. If you are surface fishing, you can round out your outfit with a seven to nine foot leader that has a 3x tippet. For nymph and other subsurface fishing, all you need is a three foot or less leader so that your fly won't rise."

Flyfishing for bass is not just something that can be enjoyed during the warm weather months, either. Ron Mateer, a Methodist minister from Fincastle, takes to the sport in the late fall and early winter.

"I enjoy flyfishing for bass in cold weather as much as I do during the spring and summer," said Mateer. "Competition from other anglers is virtually nil, and there are some nice fish to be caught. I go to nymphs and minnow imitations then, such as wooly buggers, Dave's squirrel tails, and brown hare's ear nymphs, all in sizes 12 or 14. Muddler minnows in sizes eight and ten will also produce.

"At that time of year, you really have to make precise presentations close to cover such as logs, rocks, and downed trees. The fish won't be moving very fast or far, so you need to retrieve your fly in slow strips. Another key is to fish long pools instead of the faster moving water. When you hook a bass, you'll find that it won't thrash about on the surface like it does in the summer. But a bass will fight just as hard in cold water as it does in warm."

Flyfishing for Virginia's stream bronzebacks is a pastime that can be enjoyed during all seasons by novices and experts alike. Try it this year and find out yourself! □

Bruce Ingram is the Virginia editor for Outdoor Life magazine and a frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife.

Besides popping bugs, the flyfisherman can fool smallmouth with flies, like the ones pictured here. A particularly popular smallmouth bass fly is the wooly bugger, second from the right.

good at turning over a popper."

Lou Barlow, a resident of Botetourt County and a guide for Orvis in Roanoke, says one of his main goals is to convince people that flyfishing is not a difficult sport to learn.

"As a guide, I take out a lot of people who have never flyfished and they often are pretty apprehensive about it," said Barlow. "There seems to be this mystique about flyfishing that only a few people can learn how to do it. Well, that's simply not true; anyone can learn how to flyfish for bass in a short time.

"I enjoy spinfishing and even use live bait from time to time on species like catfish. But as time goes by, more and more I concentrate on flyfishing for the sheer pleasure that it brings. No form of fishing is better than another one; however, flyfishing really helps me to interact with the bass more. I feel that I am right there with them

brush, overhanging tree limbs, or various shoreline vegetation, then a rollcast can be made without getting hung up. A rollcast is also great if you are fishing from a canoe with someone or if you are standing side by side to a buddy on a crowded stream. I especially like to use rollcasts when I am fishing the James. I can place a fly every two feet or so along a likely stretch of cover, and I can make casts quicker and cover the water more efficiently than a spinfisherman can. So don't let anyone tell you that there aren't advantages to using a fly rod."

The Botetourt resident, who has also fished on such streams as the upper Potomac, the New, and the Cowpasture, believes the standard flycast is also not difficult to become proficient with.

"The standard flycast, also known as the pick up and lay down, is really the only other cast that you need to

Building A Home For Bobwhites

by Chris Wheaton



Bobwhites need a certain type of habitat to survive and flourish. Department wildlife biologist Chris Wheaton details how you can make conditions on your land right for quail.

photo by Lloyd B. Hill



Most people who observe wildlife develop a feel for where game will be found. This recognition of "gamey looking" areas is really a field level analysis of wildlife habitat, with the outdoorsman's experience providing background information on where a particular wildlife species might be found.

Once we recognize good small game habitat, we can improve it. The first step is to understand the life cycle of the animal or animals that most interest us. In this particular article, we will concentrate on quail, but the techniques can be adapted to improve habitat for many species. As a matter of fact, it would be impossible to target our habitat improvement for only quail, as many other animals with similar habitat needs will benefit from our work.

Bobwhite are what we call an early successional species, which simply means that their habitat is composed of disturbed areas, young growth, and places where newly turned soil prompts the growth of weeds and grassy cover. In Virginia, undisturbed land moves quickly towards forest, which means that we must work to create habitat for quail, or woodland will take over our open areas and eliminate good habitat for our birds. Unless we break the soil and provide the early successional stages of plant growth, we will not have high quail numbers.

The basic requirements for good bobwhite habitat are: food, resting cover (a headquarters), nesting cover, and escape cover (shelter during severe weather that also screens the birds while feeding and moving in their daily range). Quail generally do not need open water, since they can meet their requirements from their food and morning dew.

All these habitat components must be in close proximity, and they must all be present or we will not have birds. In addition, the different components should all be accessible to the covey on the ground. If quail must fly to reach part of their range, they are exposed to unnecessary danger, and their habitat is not ideal. It is especially important to concentrate on the interspersion of

the different habitat components, which is the mixing and intermingling of the different habitat types throughout the covey range. Providing many small patches and strips of the different components creates much better habitat than the same quantity of habitat in large, uniform blocks.

Some important small game habitat improvement techniques developed by Game Department personnel and wildlife professionals from throughout the country are listed below. Landowners should remember that these techniques are not applicable under all circumstances, and some require spe-



Bobwhites require food, resting cover, nesting cover, and escape cover to thrive. Choke cherry (above; photo by Rob Simpson) is a prominent component of brushy hedgerows which provide good resting and escape cover, while dogwood (right; photo by John M. Coffman) and wild grape (above right; photo by William S. Lea) are preferred native food plants.



Food

Native Plants: Quail were present long before we started planting crops. The very best quail management involves producing large quantities of native food plants by manipulating succession. Preferred plants include ragweed, beggar's tick, partridge pea, native lespedezas, oaks, grape, dogwood, and honeysuckle. These plants can be encouraged to grow through various means. Most simply, just allowing old fields and waste spaces to grow up in weedy or brushy cover will promote such growth. Fire, used carefully, will also encourage the growth of legumes and other food plants when combined with agricultural and forestry practices. Finally, scratching the soil with a disk will prevent sod formation and promote the growth of the annual plants which are the best quail food producers.

Plantings: Food crops planted in plots and strips are good for attracting birds and they provide more food per acre than natives, but they also require a great deal more effort and expense to produce. The most successful plantings are made with crops or varieties adapted to Virginia. These include: VA-70 shrub lespedeza, Korean lespedeza, Bobwhite soybeans, and various annual grain crops, including milo and Japanese millet. In addition to special plantings, normal agricultural operations can be modified to benefit quail. Leaving several outside rows of any grain crop unharvested around the edges of a field will provide accessible food for birds. Leaving stubble and crop residues as late into winter as possible before plowing also improves quail habitat.

Fallow Rotations: This technique combines planting a food crop with native plant production, and has been successfully used on many of our wildlife management areas throughout the state. The method involves planting a field to wheat, soybeans, milo, or some other food crop, then leaving the land idle, without turning the soil, for one to three years after harvest. This will provide initial food production from the planted crop, and also natives

such as ragweed to colonize the field behind the row crop. Leaving part of the original crop unharvested will provide even more food for quail.

Cover

Resting and Escape Cover: Cover must be provided in close proximity to food sources if quail are to utilize these resources. Good cover provides a screen from predators while still allowing ease of movement for birds running along the ground. This generally means brushy patches, hedgerows, and borders dominated by such plants as young pine, cedar, sumac, and cherry. The structure of the vegetation should prevent overhead access by hawks and owls, be dense enough to repel cats, foxes, and other terrestrial predators, and provide a windbreak and screen from the worst winter weather. The best cover is usually found in old hedgerows, where greenbrier and blackberry has grown up over a fenceline, and woody plants are growing up through the tangle. By saving such places, wildlife populations can often survive in otherwise inhospitable habitats.

Nesting Cover: Bobwhites generally prefer knee-high grassy cover for nesting. Preferred nesting sites are often on field edges, near roads or trails, or in other spots where there is a natural break in the vegetation. Scattered clumps of woody vegetation make the nesting area even more attractive. Most nesting occurs in late spring and early summer, so leaving such areas uncut from April through June is critical for nesting success. If the first nesting attempt is unsuccessful, renesting attempts may stretch the breeding season into the early fall, so it is possible that a few nests may be destroyed by late summer mowing, but this is generally not a serious problem.

Forest Management

Some of the most productive quail habitat in Virginia today consists of young cutover lands, especially when seeded with lespedeza or millet. The soil disturbance and brushy cover which results after timber cutting

cial training and equipment to be properly applied. Those interested in using these methods are advised to contact the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Game Division at (804) 367-1000 for further information and the name of the District Wildlife Biologist in their area.



Prescribed burning can encourage the growth of native food plants for the bobwhite, when used carefully and in concert with agricultural and forestry best management practices; photo by William S. Lea.

operations will generally provide good bird habitat for five to seven years after harvest. Following Best Management Practices (or BMP's), such as seeding log decks, skid trails, and roads with wildlife food plants and leaving buffer strips along streams will improve this habitat further, as well as preventing erosion. Other woodland management techniques which have been used to benefit quail are the thinning and burning of pine stands, and selective thinning of hardwood stands to increase hard and soft mast production. Including some or all of these techniques into your timber management plans will allow you to produce wildlife as well as income from your woodland acreage.

In one short lifetime, we have seen the end of the time when quail and other small game were an accidental by-product of our land use. The skills

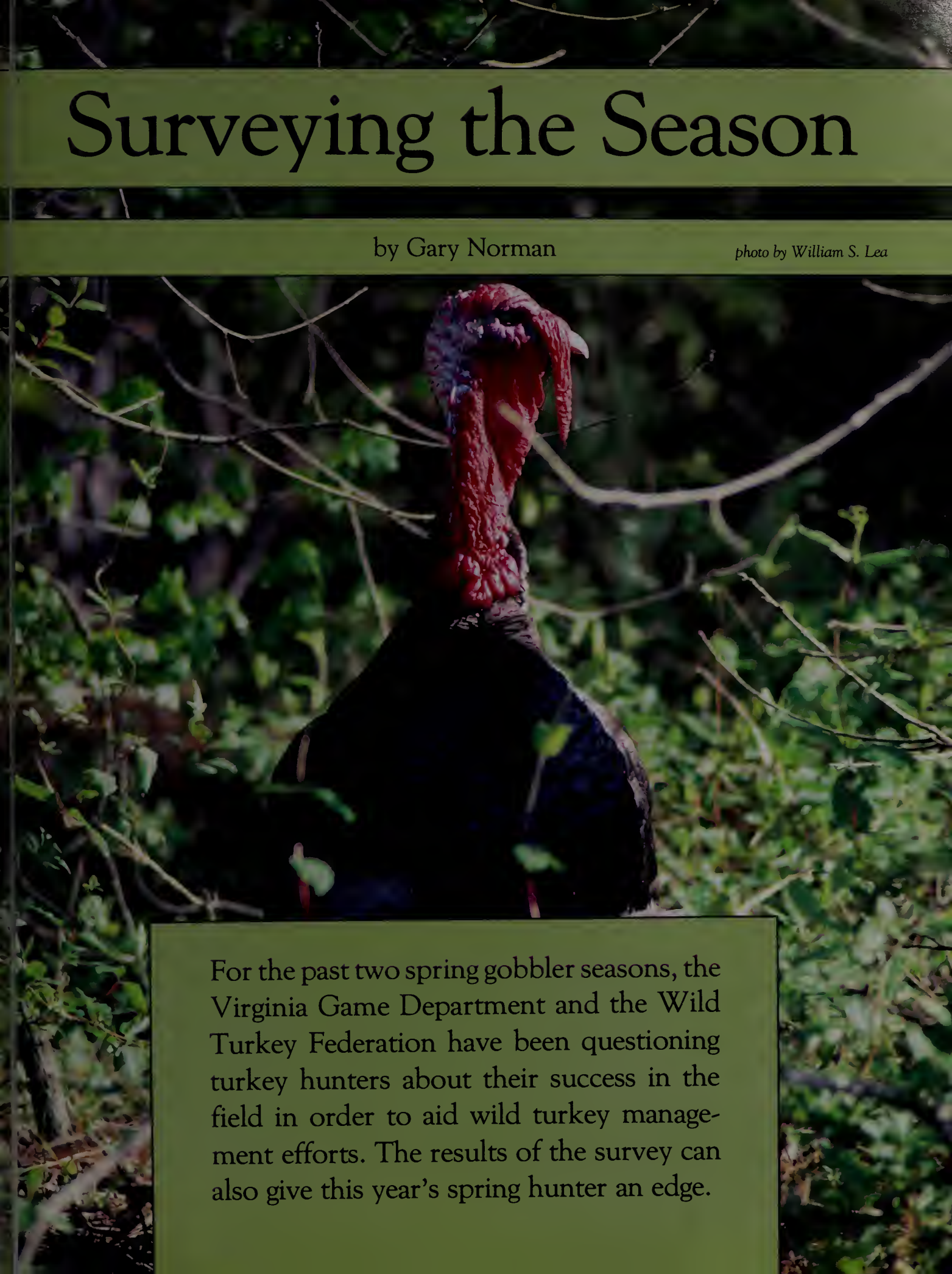
which allow us to produce more food and fiber from our lands have also had the unfortunate side effect of reducing the numbers of many of the animals we most enjoy hunting and observing. Fortunately, we have the knowledge required to understand the habitat needs of the bobwhite and many other wildlife species. Now we must decide how much effort we are willing to put forth to provide for the needs of these animals. In a very real sense, small game habitat is created by our decisions as land managers. If we choose to ignore wildlife, it will decrease at an alarming rate, but if we choose to consider these animals in our land use decisions, we will be on the way to fulfilling our serious responsibility as stewards of the land and its tenants. □

Chris Wheaton is a Department wildlife biologist working out of the Powhatan office.

Surveying the Season

by Gary Norman

photo by William S. Lea



For the past two spring gobbler seasons, the Virginia Game Department and the Wild Turkey Federation have been questioning turkey hunters about their success in the field in order to aid wild turkey management efforts. The results of the survey can also give this year's spring hunter an edge.

During the 1987 and 1988 spring gobbler seasons, hunters across Virginia have participated in an ongoing gobbler season survey conducted by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Virginia Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation. Hunters cooperating in the survey were asked to respond to questions on effort, observations, harvests and related activities while gobbler hunting in order to gain better information on the biological and sociological aspects of Virginia's gobbler season. The information will be used by the Department to better manage the wild turkey and the hunting public.

The two-part survey sought to profile aspects of the hunter as well as the wildlife resource, and participation in the survey was excellent with reports totaling 3,811 hunts and covering 85 counties received from 391 cooperators in the two surveys.

Participants in the survey varied from the novice to the expert in terms of their ability. Overall, however, cooperators averaged 11.9 years of experience. Survey cooperators hunted more often on private land (76 percent) than public land (24 percent). This is important information, since the availability of land to hunt spring gobblers and other game species is a matter of concern for many Virginians as development and land posting increases, particularly in the eastern part of the state. About 21 percent of the survey cooperators have leased land, with the average lease totaling 1,356 acres, for better quality hunting opportunities.

In regards to their equipment, cooperators used 12-gauge shotguns with either 4 or 6 shot most often. Decoys are a relatively recent technique for spring gobbler hunters, and their use was noted by 17 percent of the cooperators. In the 1988 survey, cooperators averaged spending \$206.80 for equipment, travel, food and lodging. Expanding this figure to the estimated 57,000 spring gobbler hunters in Virginia, the contribution of these hunters in Virginia to the Commonwealth's economy totals some \$11,787,600.

In terms of hunting success over the last two years, cooperators have averaged hearing 12.5, seeing 4.5, calling 3.0 and killing 0.98 gobblers each season. In accomplishing these results, cooperators spent an average 12.5 days afield annually, hunting 3.2 hours daily. On a statewide basis, cooperators averaged hearing 0.35 gobblers per hour or about 1.14 gobblers per hunt during the first two years of the survey. Within the ecological ranges of the wild turkey in Virginia, different rates of gobbling were observed, with the Tidewater region leading all others.

Gobbling activity throughout the season, on a statewide basis, was comparable week by week. However, interesting peaks in gobbling activity were noted, including early season peaks in gobbling activity in the Southwest region; whereas the peak of gobbling activity in the Tidewater region appeared later, in the third week of the season.

Readers may want to note this

On the average, more than one gobbler per hunt was heard by each of the nearly 400 turkey hunters over the past two years who participated in a spring hunting survey sponsored by the Virginia Game Department and the Virginia Wild Turkey Federation; photo by Dinny Slaughter.

trend, with a caution that good gobbling requires good weather. Cooperators have supplied information on weather conditions while they were hunting, and generally speaking, the greater gobbling activity has been found on days when the weather conditions were mild, with temperatures in the 50s and 60s, with an overcast sky and little to no precipitation or wind. On days of lowest gobbling, conditions were cool (30-49°F) precipitation variable, with rain reported





as moderate to downpour. Wind conditions were listed as breezy to strong and the skies were overcast.

Another important influence on gobbling activity and hunter success is the presence or absence of hens. In reporting their observations of hens throughout the season, cooperators found that the number of hens seen and called per trip declined sharply as the season progressed. The "disappearance" of these hens after the first week of the season is probably the result of hens spending more time sitting on nests.

Hunter success at calling gobblers within range increased through the season and this response may be the result of fewer "real" hens available as the season progresses. Thus, hunters should bear in mind that hunting later in the season has its advantages.

The popularity and nature of spring gobbler hunting unfortunately presents many situations where hunters are competing for the same gobbler. Over one-half of the cooperators reported some form of interference from other hunters which disturbed 10 of their hunts. The most common report was too many hunters. Short standing, or moving between a caller and the gobbler, was reported a number of times, as well as one hunter reporting his hen decoy being shot. These reports are unsettling, but should serve to reinforce the need for hunter education and stimulate ethical and safe hunting practices by all hunters. Perhaps a good measure for ethical conduct for gobbler hunters would be the golden rule.

Wildlife biologists have identified dogs as a major predator of nesting turkey hens and poults in several research projects in the Southeast. While the extent or magnitude of predation on turkeys by dogs in Virginia is unknown, 60 percent of survey participants indicated they observed free-roaming dogs. Dogs were observed on 18 percent of the hunting trips. A public information campaign to inform dog owners of the potential effects of their pets on the wildlife resource, particularly during the critical spring and summer season, is needed. You can help by informing friends or neighbors



with free-roaming dogs of this situation.

Virginia hunters are blessed with a wide variety of hunting opportunities from the Appalachians to the Atlantic. For many, the greatest challenge and greatest trophy the Old Dominion has to offer is the spring gobbler. The challenge presented by the gobbler tests the hunter's physical and mental abilities unlike any other game animal. Adept knowledge of turkey behavior and skills of turkey calling, together with personal traits of dedication, per-

Want to participate in this year's gobbler survey? Contact Gary Norman, Route 6, Box 484-A, Staunton, VA 24401—we can use the help! Photo by Janet Shaffer.

serverance, patience and endurance are common attributes of successful spring gobbler hunters.

The Department and the State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation would like to extend appreciation to those individuals who supported and cooperated with the survey. Funding for the project was provided by the Department and by the Virginia Wild Turkey Federation Superfund Project. Anyone interested in participating in the 1989 gobbler season survey is urged to contact Gary Norman, Route 6, Box 484-A, Staunton, VA 24401. Anyone interested in learning more about the Virginia Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation should contact Bob Jenks, 3819 "S" Street, NW, Washington, DC 20007 or Fred Rice, 1225 Timberlake Drive, Lynchburg, VA 24502. □

Gary W. Norman is a wildlife biologist with the Department's Game Division.

VIRGINIA'S GAME DEPARTMENT LAKES— A · P R O F I L E Lake Robertson

story & photo by Carl "Spike" Knuth

It's probably safe to say that anyone who fishes is a dreamer. It's someone who envisions those perfect fishing opportunities on a picture postcard lake, surrounded by trees and beautiful mountain scenery in the background. There are a number of lakes in Virginia that would make this "dream" come true.

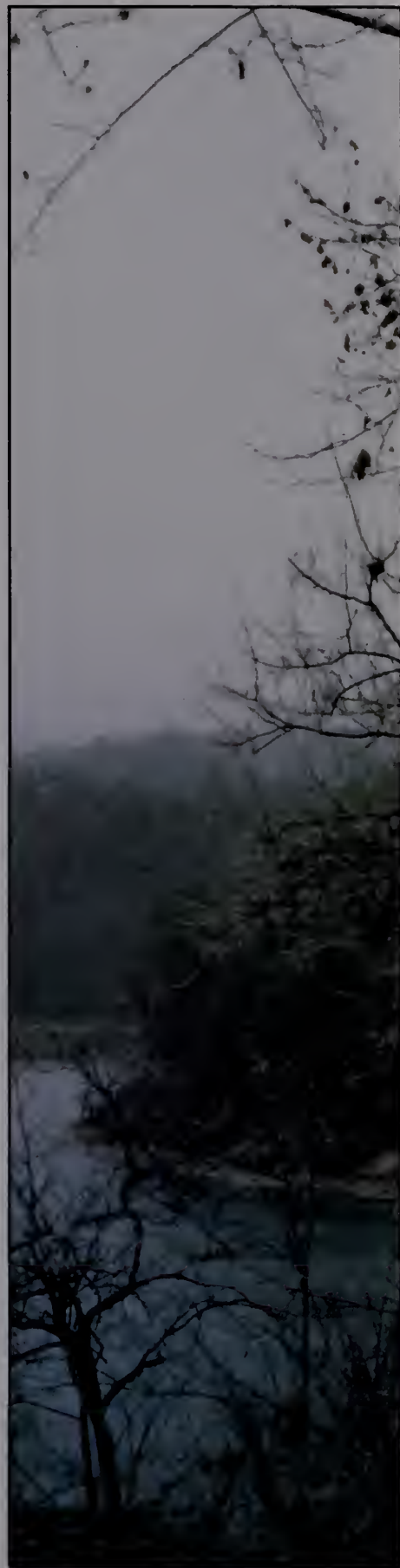
One such lake is Lake Robertson, a 31-acre jewel located in Rockbridge County. The lake was formed in a deep ravine when Collier's Creek was improved in 1971. It has a maximum depth of 42 feet and is surrounded by a mountain panorama. Lake Robertson is the focal point of the Lake A. Willis Robertson Recreational Area, a facility of some 580 acres. This area was the culmination of a cooperative effort by Rockbridge County, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and a number of other state and federal agencies.

Located on the eastern slope of the Allegheny Mountains, it was named in honor of the late Senator A. Willis Robertson, a conservationist and co-sponsor of the 1937 Pittman-Robertson Act. This law, a tax on sporting firearms and ammunition, has been the key financial support of numerous

conservation and game management and research programs.

The lake was opened to the public in October of 1972, after having been stocked with largemouth bass, bluegills and channel catfish by the Fish Division of the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Today, the lake produces good stringers of bluegills, largemouth, channel catfish and redear sunfish. In 1983, 1,600 walleye fingerlings were stocked. Walleye are now in the 20-inch range or more. There's a good bass population and there's a 12-inch size limit. Lake Robertson seems to produce at least a couple bass over 10 pounds each year, and in 1983, G.C. Williams of Millboro, pulled out a 13-pounder!

From the shore, the lake bottom drops off quickly, and there are weed beds as well as submerged brush, stumps and tree root systems along the shore to provide good cover for fish. One of the most enjoyable methods of catching bluegills is by flyfishing with small poppers or dry flies. Cast to the edges of the weed beds and brush where the bottom drops off quickly. Both bluegills and bass can be caught on live bait near drop-offs and along the edges of stumps, brush, rocks and



tree roots. Bluegills will take red worms, garden worms and crickets, while bass prefer nightcrawlers or minnows, spinnerbaits and plastic worms. Redear sunfish, called "shell-crackers," are bottom feeders, so bait such as worms, nymphs or crickets should be fished on or very near the bottom.

In a 1980 report by fisheries biologists Larry Mohn and Paul Bugas, sampling results through trap-netting and electrofishing indicated that Lake Robertson had a "strong population of largemouth bass." However, when compared to the average of other Virginia lakes, Robertson bass were a little slower growing. Growth rates of bluegills were slower than those of eastern waters as well, but this—the report stated—"should be expected in the cooler waters and shorter growing season in the mountain region." However, bluegills and some other sunfish species began to show a decline in quality, decreasing in size dramatically. It was determined that they simply didn't have enough food for good growth, and fertilization efforts were initiated in 1982. Fertilizing the lake encouraged more abundant growth of zooplankton and other organisms to provide food for sunfish species. Growth rate analysis of redear sunfish show that their growth rate is near the statewide average. Liquid fertilization of the lake is still conducted from May through July.

Weed problems have also "popped" up from time to time. From 1974 to 1983, curly leaf pondweed infested portions of the lake. It was brought under control through chemical treatment, but another weed—elodea—replaced the pondweed. Spot treatment in the early 80s appears to be keeping the vegetation in check. Curly leaf is treated from late May to early June. Elodea has to be treated annually. Grass carp, a plant eating fish, is being considered to keep the weeds in check.

Some major repairs to the dam were required in recent years, but were completed by 1987. Surprisingly, Lake Robertson has been one of Virginia's heaviest fished lakes. This is probably



1 · 9 · 8 · 9

VIRGINIA

L a k e s G u i d e



Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Lakes Index by County

Albemarle County

Albemarle Lake

Amelia County

Amelia Lake

Brunswick County

Brunswick Lake

Buckingham County

Horsepen Lake

Fairfax County

Burke Lake

Fauquier County

Lake Brittle

Phelps Pond

Lake Thompson

Fluvanna County

Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake

Frederick County

Lake Frederick

Halifax County

Lake Connor

Lee County

Lake Keokee

Mecklenburg County

Lake Gordon

Nelson County

Lake Nelson

Northumberland County

Gardys Mill Pond

Nottoway County

Nottoway Lake

Orange County

Lake Orange

Pittsylvania County

Lake Burton

White Oak Mountain WMA Ponds

Powhatan County

Powhatan Lakes

Powhatan Ponds

Prince Edward County

Briery Creek Lake

Rockbridge County

Lake Robertson

Rockingham County

Shenandoah Lake

Russell County

Laurel Bed Lake

Scott County

Bark Camp Lake

Stafford County

Lake Curtis

Sussex County

Lake Airfield

Washington County

Hidden Valley Lake

Westmoreland County

Chandlers Mill Pond

Wythe County

Rural Retreat Lake

1989 Lakes Guide

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries owns and manages lakes across the state. Following is the latest information concerning these lakes. This is not a complete list of all the lakes that Department Fish Division biologists are involved with, however. There are numerous city, county, federal, state park, corporate and private lakes and reservoirs that biologists take an active role in managing. In the past, many of these lakes have been publicized in a variety of publications. Too often, however, Department lakes have not been publicized as much as they should. It is hoped that this guide will help Virginia anglers identify which lakes are owned and managed by the Department.

Lake Airfield **Sussex County (105 acres)**

Located five miles south of Wakefield on Route 628 west of U.S. 460. The lake has a large watershed which results in a great inflow of water. It's located in an agricultural area surrounded by mixed pine and hardwoods. Its deepest spot is about 12 feet. It has a good submerged aquatic plant growth with beds of lily pads.

The lake contains largemouth bass, black crappie, chain pickerel, bluegill and flier.

There is a dirt boat ramp but no concession or boat rentals. Bait, tackle, food and lodging are available in nearby Wakefield.

Airfield is a challenge to fish. Few anglers can consistently catch fish here. The most noteworthy opportunities are largemouth bass in fall, chain pickerel in early spring, crappie in spring and fall and flier in late summer and fall. Bass run up to eight pounds in Department samples, while crappies of two pounds are not uncommon. Airfield has some of the biggest fliers in the state.

Albemarle Lake **Albemarle County (35.5 acres)**

From the Routes 240-250 junction near Crozet, take 680 to 614, then right on 675, to get to the lake. It's

located in the Blue Ridge foothills with a mixed pine and hardwood shoreline and some marshy spots. Its deepest point is 29 feet.

The lake contains largemouth bass, bluegill, black crappie, channel catfish, redear, pumpkinseed, suckers, walleyes and northern pike.

There is a boat ramp and parking, but no concessions. Private boats are allowed with electric motors only. The lake is open one hour before sunrise till 11 P.M.

A number of brush, log and tire fish attractors have been sunken into the lake to enhance fishing. Albemarle Lake is a scenic lake with a nice panfish population.

Amelia Lake **Amelia County (105 acres)**

Amelia Lake can be reached off of U.S. 360 west of Richmond by taking Route 604 through Chula north to Route 616, then west to 652. From U.S. 60, take Route 622 south from Flat Rock, veer right on 610 then right on 604, right on 616 and right on 652.

The lake lays in rolling farmland with some old submerged timber along the old creek bed. Brush fish attractors have been placed and marked in several locations around the lake.

It contains largemouth bass, bluegills, channel catfish, black crappie, redear and walleyes.

There is a boat ramp but no concessions or rentals. Private boats are allowed but with electrics only. Foot trails around the lake provide a lot of shorefishing opportunities. There is a floating pier for the handicapped, a comfort station and a lot of grassy areas for an old fashioned picnic. Country stores and filling stations nearby provide drinks, snacks, bait and tackle.

There is a 12-inch minimum size limit on largemouth bass and lake hours are one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset.

Fall and spring are the best periods

for largemouths with some six pounders coming out of the lake. Spring is good for crappies as well, and there is an excellent channel catfish population.

Bark Camp **Scott County (48 acres)**

This lake was first known as Corder Bottom, then ScottOWise Lake. It is located seven miles north of Dunganon on Routes 653 to 706 in the Clinch Ranger District of the Jefferson National Forest.

Its cool, brown-stained water is surrounded by rugged, wooded mountains. Foot trails provide access to various portions of the lake. Grass carp have been introduced to control vegetation.

The lake also has largemouth bass, black crappie, bluegill, northern pike and put n' take trout.

A National Forest stamp and trout stamp are required. The lake is closed to fishing during the closed trout season since it is designated as trout waters. It reopens with the opening of trout season. Electric motors only are allowed.

Briery Creek Lake **Prince Edward County** **(9,845 acres)**

Located about seven miles south of Farmville off of Route 15 on the Briery Creek WMA. The lake was just opened to fishing in January 1989. Timber has been left standing in about 50 percent of the lake.

The lake has been stocked with Florida-northern strain of largemouth bass, chain pickerel, crappie, bluegill, redear and channel catfish. Special largemouth bass regulations allow for a creel limit of only two bass with a minimum size limit of 18 inches.

At the present time, there is only a temporary boat ramp at the dam. Plans are to build two permanent ramps; one at the dam and one off of Route 701. Other future building plans include a concession with boat rentals, comfort stations, picnic areas and a handicapped fishing area with related facilities. There

are also some bank fishing opportunities around the ramp sites.

Briery Creek is expected to produce excellent bass and pickerel fishing with crappies a couple of years away.

Lake Brittle

Fauquier County (77 acres)

It is located off of Route 29 near New Baltimore via Route 600 east to Route 676, then south adjacent to Vint Hill Station.

The lake is surrounded by mixed hardwood and pine in gently rolling countryside. It has some cattails and heavy growths of water lilies in the upper portion. The lake was drawn down during the winter of 88-89 to control aquatic vegetation.

Brittle contains largemouth bass, bluegill, black crappie, pumpkinseed, redear, channel catfish, blue catfish, tiger musky and walleye.

There is a boat ramp, concession with boat and motor rentals; licenses, bait, tackle, snacks and drinks. There is a rest station, a small picnic ground and a fishing pier for the shorebound and the handicapped.

The lake is regularly fertilized to increase fish growth rates and a number of fish attractors (shelters) have been sunk in key places and are marked by buoys.

Electric motors only are allowed and there is a 12-15 inch slot limit on largemouth bass. Bass in that size range must be returned.

The lake has a good redear and channel catfish population. Spring and fall are best for crappie and bass; summer for bluegill, pumpkinseed and catfish and spring for redear.

The concession phone number is (703) 349-1253.

Brunswick Lake

Brunswick County (150 acres)

Located east of Lawrenceville, just north of Route 58 via Route 638.

The water is dark-stained and the lake is surrounded by hardwood forests. A few cattails and lily pad beds are around the lake and it has an expanding growth of elodea. The watershed is a little large for effective fertilization, but the lake is a good pro-

ducer of largemouth bass, bluegills, black crappie, chain pickerel, redear, channel catfish and blue catfish.

There is a boat ramp for private boats, but no concessions or rentals. There are supplies available at local stores nearby. Brush attractors have been built and sunk into various spots in the lake and some trees have been dropped along shorelines to improve cover.

Electric motors only are allowed and the lake is open 24 hours a day. There is a 12-inch minimum on largemouths.

Fishing is good early in the season and fishing pressure is generally light. An abundance of redear provides some good spring and summer fishing, while crappie are good in spring and fall.

Burke Lake

Fairfax County (150 acres)

Burke Lake is located on Route 123 from I-95 at Woodbridge, between Fairfax and Occoquan.

It is surrounded by the Burke Lake Regional Park and its shoreline is edged with mixed pine and hardwoods. It has one large island and a number of dropoffs and submerged ridges that provide good cover.

The lake has largemouth bass, bluegills, black crappie, pumpkinseed, redear, white crappie, channel catfish, blue catfish, walleyes, and muskie. Burke is the source of most of the muskie eggs that support the state's muskie rearing program. Some of them reach up to 30 pounds or more!

There are two boat ramps (one free, the other fee), a concession run by the park that provides boat rentals, drinks, snacks, bait and tackle; nature trails, bank fishing, comfort stations and camping.

The lake's watershed ratio allows intensive fertilization which aids fish production, while a number of man-made fish shelters, marked with buoys, adds to the fish habitat.

Electric motors only are allowed. Check signs for other regulations.

This lake is probably the most heavily used of all smaller lakes due to its location near a high population area. It's probably a good idea to fish earlier

in the year and earlier in the morning to avoid the daily activities of boaters and sunbathers.

Muskies in the 28 to 30-pound range are not uncommon. Samples have revealed walleyes in the 10-pound range and largemouth bass average two to three pounds. Big crappies, redears and bluegills are the other highlights of this lake.

For more information, call the park office at (703) 323-6600.

Lake Burton

Pittsylvania County (76 acres)

Burton is located six miles north of Callands via Routes 969 and 800.

Its shore is wooded among rolling hills. It is relatively shallow, easily muddied by rains and has very few stumps or snags.

The lake has largemouth bass, bluegills, black crappie, channel catfish, redear and chain pickerel.

There's a recently improved boat ramp but no concessions. Necessary supplies can be purchased from the many small businesses on the roads leading to the lake. Brush attractors and downed trees along the shorelines provide fish with some structure to hide in.

The lake is open 24 hours a day and there is a 12-inch minimum for bass. Electric motors only are allowed.

Spring, early summer and fall are the best times to fish, with crappie and largemouth bass being the best bets. Some big bass have been showing up lately and this lake could be a sleeper.

Chandlers Mill Pond

Westmoreland County (75 acres)

This mill pond is located on Route 3 near Montross. Has forested shore with no bank fishing. It has a primitive ramp for carry-in boats.

The lake has largemouth bass, bluegills, black crappie, flier and pickerel.

All state regulations apply. The lake has good trophy bass potential.

Lake Connor

Halifax County (111 acres)

It is located in northern Halifax, eight miles north of Clover; specifically at the end of Route 624, off of Route 623, about five miles from 608

west of Whitesville.

The lake lies in rolling hills surrounded by mature hardwoods and scattered pines. There are cattail beds on its upper end. It has a maximum depth of 15 feet with mostly 10 foot water.

This lake was thrust into the spotlight in 1984 when some lunker largemouths began showing up, producing two quick records in succession. This confirmed the feelings of fisheries biologists who had always felt that largemouth had to be doing well here due to the gizzard shad forage that was present. The big bass are thought to be Florida bass/native hybrids—survivors of a 1974 stocking. Additionally, a 4 lb., 13 oz. crappie came out of here in 1967!

In addition to largemouths and crappie, the lake has chain pickerel, redear, channel catfish, blue catfish and bluegill.

There is a boat ramp for private boats but no rentals. Necessary supplies can be purchased from numerous local stores.

The lake is open 24 hours a day and there is a 15-inch minimum size limit on bass. Electric motors only are allowed.

Brush attractors and downed shoreline trees have added to the structure and cover for fish. Look for good bass fishing in spring, early summer and in fall, and bluegills during April and May.

Lake Curtis

Stafford County (91 acres)

The lake is located west of Fredericksburg by taking Route 17 north to 616, then west on 662.

Timber was left standing in a large portion of the lake and fertilization has increased fish growth by providing more food.

The lake contains largemouth bass, bluegill, black crappie, pumpkinseed, channel catfish, pickerel and northern pike.

It has a boat ramp for private boats. Curtis Memorial Park is located on the opposite side and rents boats, has a rest station and picnic grounds.

Electric motors only are allowed.

The abundance of standing timber makes it a unique environment to fish in.

For information, call the park office at (703) 659-6662.

Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake

Fluvanna County (50.5 acres)

Fluvanna-Ruritan is located off Route 619 and can be reached from Route 53 out of Cunningham in western Fluvanna, west of Palmyra.

Its maximum depth is 33 feet, and its shores are lined with hardwood forest and cleared farmland. The water is generally clear. The wooded side has some steep dropoffs with a lot of sunken trees while the open shores are shallow with good aquatic plant growth.

It holds largemouth bass, walleyes, bluegills, black crappies, channel catfish, redear and pumpkinseed.

There is a boat ramp for private boats but no boat rentals or concessions. Parking and picnic tables are available.

The lake is fertilized regularly to increase food production. It has doubled its standing crop of fish in the last seven years. Samples show that the lake produces 200 pounds of fish per acre. A heavy algae bloom in late May and early June hinders fishing somewhat.

The lake is open 24 hours a day and there is a 12-inch minimum on bass. Electric motors only are allowed.

The wooded shore is good for crappie in spring and fall, while big bluegills can be taken in spring near shore and deeper in summer. Largemouth bass are especially active in late summer through November.

Lake Frederick

Frederick County (117 acres)

(Lake Frederick is not expected to open until 1990.)

Lake Frederick is located west of Routes 340 and 522, six miles north of Front Royal. Formerly known as Wheatlands Lake, it has undergone numerous improvements to its dam, spillway and shorelines.

Its maximum depth is 52 feet. Multiple fish attractors have been con-

structed and marked. The lake has largemouth bass, bluegill, redear, walleyes and channel catfish.

There will be a boat ramp, concession with boat rentals, bait, tackle and food.

Hours will be one hour before sunrise to 11 P.M.

Gardys Mill Pond

Northumberland County (75 acres)
(Gardys Mill Pond will open in 1990.)

It is located on Route 617, from Route 3 east, and Route 202 near Hyacinth.

Dam was rebuilt recently and the lake stocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, redear and channel catfish. It also has chain pickerel.

There is a boat ramp but no rentals. State regulations apply.

Lake Gordon

Mecklenburg County (157 acres)

This lake can be reached from U.S. 1 and 58, by going west on Route 664 to Route 799 near South Hill.

The lake contains largemouth bass, chain pickerel, black crappie, white crappie, bluegills, pumpkinseed, redear, channel catfish and blue catfish.

It has numerous logs, stumps, standing snags and lily pads, but the lake is relatively shallow. Brush attractors have been constructed and crappie fishing success has been improved as a result.

There is a boat ramp for private boats, but no boat rentals. A small amount of land around the ramp and dam allows for only limited shore fishing. Supplies can be purchased from local stores.

Electric motors only are allowed and there is a 12-inch minimum on largemouth bass. The lake is open 24 hours a day.

Crappie fishing should be good here, with last spring's sampling showing up to 15-inchers being fairly common.

Horsepen Lake

Buckingham County (19 acres)

This lake is located within the Horsepen Lake Wildlife Management Area, three miles south of Buckingham Courthouse on Route 638.

This beautiful little lake has forested shores with possible, but difficult bank fishing opportunities.

The lake has largemouth bass, bluegills, black crappie, pumpkinseed, channel catfish, northern pike and redear.

There is a boat ramp and a picnic shelter overlooking the lake.

Hidden Valley

Washington County (61 acres)

Located in the Hidden Valley WMA, 20 miles northwest of Abingdon on Route 690, off of Routes 19 and Alternate 58, the lake is nestled in the mountains at 3,500 feet. Standing timber originally in the lake bed was cut during dam modifications and shoreline deepening. The waters are naturally acid.

There is a boat ramp, but no rentals or other concessions. Camping is allowed outside of 100 yards from the lake shore and well water is available.

Fishing is allowed 24 hours a day. No gas motors are allowed.

The lake has been drawn down for most of 1989 for repairs on the dam and spillway. It will be reopened again in late 1989 or early 1990.

In recent years it has been managed for smallmouth bass, redbreast sunfish and rock bass. Walleyes were also planted on an experimental basis with alewives being stocked for forage. Present plans are to continue to manage the lake in the same way.

Lake Keokee

Lee County (92 acres)

Lake Keokee is located near the village of Keokee and can be reached by taking Route 23 and Alternate 58 north from Big Stone Gap, then on to Route 68 west to Route 623. Take Route 623 east to its end at the lake. It is located within the Clinch Ranger District of the Jefferson National Forest.

The lake contains largemouth bass, tiger musky, bluegill and channel catfish.

There is a boat ramp for private boats but not rentals. A spacious parking lot and restroom facilities maintained by the Forest Service are available. There are no camping facilities in

the immediate area and supplies must be purchased at local stores.

Fishing is allowed 24 hours a day, but no gasoline motors are allowed. A Forest Stamp is required and there is a 12-inch minimum size on bass.

Present management policies are providing a good bass and bluegill fishery.

Laurel Bed Lake

Russell County (300 acres)

Located within the Clinch Mountain WMA, the lake is five miles from Saltville via 634 through Allison Gap, then left on 613 to Route 747.

Laurel Bed lies in a formerly boggy depression on top of Clinch Mountain. Second growth hardwoods, red spruce, cedar and hemlock surround the lake. The lake averages 15 feet in depth, with the deepest spot being 38 feet. It was originally constructed to provide additional summer flow for the fee-fishing section of Big Tumbling Creek.

The lake is managed for brook trout and is stocked once a year, usually in November. A number of weird-looking contraptions on the lake are aerators, wind-driven and serving to aerate the lake with oxygen.

There is a concession located at the entrance to the area where bait, tackle, food, drink, daily permits and 5-day trip licenses are available. There is a concrete boat ramp for private boats but no rentals. Primitive camping is provided by the Division of Parks for a small fee.

Electric motors only are allowed, and the use of minnows for bait is prohibited. A daily permit is required to fish the lake, but no trout stamp is needed except after Labor Day into February. The lake closes November 1 for restocking and reopens along with the reopening of regular trout season.

Best trout action is from the opening of trout season through June, then again in September through October. Spinners, nightcrawlers and mealworms are preferred baits.

Lake Nelson

Nelson County (40 acres)

This lake is located in the Blue Ridge foothills, south of Lovingston via

Highway 29 to Colleen and Route 655 to Arrington, then left or north on Route 812 to the lake.

It has a maximum depth of 32 feet and a forested shore of mixed pine and hardwoods. The Department has constructed a number of fish shelters which are marked by buoys.

The lake contains largemouth bass, bluegills, black crappie, channel catfish, redear and pumpkinseed sunfish.

There is a boat ramp and a launch fee. A concession rents boats and accessories and sells bait, tackle, licenses, snacks and drinks. There is a private campground adjacent to the lake.

The lake opens one hour before sunrise and closes at 11 P.M. Electric motors only are allowed and there is a 12-15 inch slot limit on bass. Only bass under 12 inches or over 15 inches may be kept.

Lake Nelson is considered a very good channel catfish lake. For information, call (703) 263-4345.

Nottoway Lake

Nottoway County (188 acres)

To the locals, it is known as Lee's Lake, since it is an impoundment of Lee's Creek. It is located six miles north of Blackstone on Route 606, off of U.S. 460.

The lake has an abundance of standing timber that was left in its basin and now provides good cover for the fish.

The species menu includes largemouth bass, chain pickerel, black crappie, bluegill, redear, channel catfish and blue catfish.

There is a boat ramp with spacious parking but no rentals or concession. There are picnic tables at the ramp area and some bank fishing opportunities, making it a good family spot.

The lake is open 24 hours a day, has a 12-inch minimum size limit on bass and electric motors only are allowed.

Largemouth, bluegill and crappie are good in spring and fall with bluegill being good throughout the summer.

Lake Orange

Orange County (124 acres)

The lake is located five miles east of Orange on Route 629 from Route 20, or from Route 522.

It lies in rolling farmland, with some of its shores forested and some lined with alder or farmland. Its maximum depth is 32 feet and it has a number of small islands.

Due to its low watershed to surface acre ratio, the lake can be effectively fertilized to improve fish production. Nine underwater fish shelters are marked by buoys.

The lake has northern pike, walleye, black crappies, blue catfish, bluegill, pumpkinseed, largemouth and war-mouth.

There is a boat ramp and a concession which rents boats and motors, bait, tackle, food and drinks. The concession is open from mid-March through late October, but the lake is open year round. There is a spacious parking lot, a rest station and picnic tables. There is also a floating fishing pier for handicapped or shore-bound anglers for a small fee.

Electric motors only are allowed and regulations are posted.

Crappies are especially abundant and northern pike and walleye are doing well here.

For more information, call the concession at (703) 899-4169.

Phelps Pond Fauquier County (3 acres)

Located in the C.F. Phelps WMA on Route 651 west of Route 17 near Sumerduck.

A small picturesque pond with no facilities. Bank fishing only with foot travel from designated parking area.

A fish attractor of sunken cedar trees enhances shore fishing opportunities.

The pond contains largemouth bass, bluegills, redear and channel catfish. Both channel catfish and redear are sizeable.

Powhatan Lakes Powhatan County (40 & 26 acres)

The Upper and Lower Powhatan Lakes are located about 45 miles west of Richmond. Take Route 684 north from U.S. 60 to Route 625 west and keep veering left.

Both lakes were once millponds and have heavily brushed and wooded shores with abundant lily pads and

other aquatic plant growths. The lakes are a little difficult to manage due to the large watershed area and shallow waters. Two brush shelters have been sunk in the smaller lower lake.

They contain largemouth bass, black crappies, bluegill, chain pickerel, redear pumpkinseed and channel catfish.

There are primitive, mostly dirt ramps on both lakes with no boat rentals or concessions. Bait, tackle and food are available close by along U.S. 60. Bank fishing is allowed but difficult due to the shoreline brush and shallow, weedy water.

In recent years the lakes are providing excellent crappie fishing in both spring and fall.

Powhatan Ponds Powhatan County (9, 7.8, & 2 acres)

These are located in the Powhatan WMA south of U.S. 60, then south on Route 627, to entrance sign.

Three ponds of 9, 7.8, and 2 acres provide mainly bank fishing, but carp-tops and canoes can be carried in and launched at primitive ramps.

There are toilet facilities but no other modern facilities. Electric motors only are allowed.

The ponds contain largemouth bass, bluegill, black crappie, pumpkinseed, and redear. Some large golden shiners can be caught on hook and line for an unusual experience in the upper 7.8-acre pond.

Lake Robertson Rockbridge County (31 acres)

Lake A. Willis Robertson is located in the recreation area of the same name, nine miles west of Lexington and can be reached by taking Route 251 to 770, then Route 652 near Collierstown.

The lake was formed in a steep, wooded ravine and the shore drops off from rocky bluffs, and the shallow stretches have abundant growth of aquatic plants. Some plants, such as elodea, have had to be controlled.

Robertson contains largemouth bass, bluegills, redear, channel catfish and walleyes.

The recreation area, operated by Rockbridge County, has about every-

thing anyone could ask for. It has a boat ramp, 50-unit campground, picnic grounds with shelters, swimming pool tennis courts, playground and a concession where boats, motors and accessories as well as snacks, drinks, bait and tackle are sold. There are hiking trails around the lake. For large campers there are sewage dumps. There is also a comfort station with showers and toilet facilities.

Fishing hours correspond with park hours, so check with the park office. There's a 12-inch minimum size limit on largemouth bass and electric motors only are allowed.

Robertson produces some citation largemouth every year while redear and bluegill reach good sizes. There's also a good population of two to three pound walleyes.

The area is an excellent family recreation area. For more information, call the area office at (804) 463-4164.

Rural Retreat Lake Wythe County (90 acres)

The lake is located south of the town of Rural Retreat off I-81 or U.S. 11 on Routes 749 to 677 to 671.

The lake lies in what was once pasture and farmland. Its shoreline is open grassland interspersed with woodlands.

It has largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, black crappie, muskellunge and redear. Grass carp have been stocked to control aquatic plant problems and are not legal to keep.

A concession is located at the entrance to the lake where rental boats, bait, tackle, snacks and drinks are available. A campground with 20 units, picnic grounds and a swimming pool are also available. The facilities are operated by the Rural Retreat Lake Authority and fees are required for their use.

Swimming is prohibited and electric motors only are allowed. The lake is open 24 hours a day and there is a 12-inch minimum size limit on bass.

This is another excellent family facility. The lake provides a unique and excellent muskie fishery.

For information, call (703) 686-4331.

Shenandoah Lake

Rockingham County (36 acres)

Lake Shenandoah is located six miles east of Harrisonburg off Route 33 on Route 276 near Penn Laird.

The lake is located on a plateau near Massaneta Springs which feeds the lake. Its maximum depth is 26 feet. Aquatic plants stimulated by excessive nutrients and sediment have caused some problems. Grass carp have been introduced to alleviate them.

Largemouth bass, bluegills, black crappie, channel catfish, pumpkinseed sunfish, muskellunge and walleye are found in the lake.

There is a boat ramp and parking, but no rentals or concessions. A number of fish attractors have been sunk in the lake and are marked.

Hours for the lake are one hour before sunrise and one hour after.

Lake Thompson

Fauquier County (10 acres)

It is located in the G.R. Thompson WMA and can be reached from I-66 via Route 688 north at Markham. Go to second parking area on left.

This small picturesque lake has a partially wooded shore with no facilities except parking. Carry in boats are approved for use here.

Bluegills, redear and channel catfish can be caught here, and in 1986, a number of adult smallmouth were introduced. All state regulations apply.

White Oak Mountain WMA Ponds

Pittsylvania County (1/2 to 7 acres)

Located east of Chatham out Route 832 to 649 or 640, then right to 706 or 707. Look for a sign and follow road to end.

There are five fishable ponds out of 12 on the area with Pete's Pond being the largest.

Largemouth bass, bluegill, redear, and channel catfish are found in Pete's Pond, while mainly bluegills and largemouths are found in the others.

Cartops can be put in on Pete's Pond while the others are basically walk-in bank fishing. There's a 10 to 15-inch slot limit on largemouth in all ponds.

Bluegill fishing is good on all ponds.

Handicapped Facilities Offered At Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries Lakes

Type	Location
Floating Fishing Pier	Lake Orange/Orange Co.
Floating Fishing Pier	Amelia Lake/Amelia Co.
Floating Fishing Pier	Lake Brittle/Fauquier Co.
Fixed Fishing Pier	City Dock/City of Fredericksburg
Fixed Catwalk	Lake Anna/Louisa Co.
Fishing Trail	Bark-Camp Lake/Scott-Wise Co.
Concession Restrooms	Crooked Creek/Carroll Co.
Concession Restrooms	Lake Orange/Orange Co.
Concession Restrooms	Big Tumbling Creek/Washington-Smythe Co.
Toilets	Amelia Lake/Amelia Co.
Boating Pier/Ramp	City Dock/City of Fredericksburg
Boating Pier/Ramp	Gloucester Point/Gloucester Co.
Boating Pier/Ramp	Owls Creek/City of Va. Beach
Boating Pier/Ramp	Portsmouth City Park/Portsmouth
Boating Pier/Ramp	Fox Hill/City of Hampton
Boating Pier/Ramp	General Vaughan Bridge/Southampton Co.
Boating Pier/Ramp	Lake Brittle/Fauquier Co.
Boating Pier/Ramp	Lake Nottoway/Nottoway Co.
Boating Pier/Ramp	Mill Creek Reservoir/Amherst Co.
Boating Pier/Ramp	Gardy's Mill Pond/Westmoreland Co.



The Department is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age or handicap.



due in part to the fact that the recreation area itself has much to offer. It has over 50 campsites that accommodate anything from tentsto large campers to pull-through trailers. All sites have access to water and electricity and each has a picnic bench and fire ring. A comfort station provides individual showers and dressing rooms. For larger RV's there's a dumping station and two sink wastes sumps.

The area also has hiking trails, tennis courts, volleyball and badminton courts, a softball field, horseshoe pits and a modern swimming pool and bath house. The picnic grounds are equipped with fireplaces and tables. A group picnic shelter that will accommodate 150 people has two fireplaces, tables and restrooms.

There is a launch ramp at the lake for private boats, and boat rentals are available. They and all the necessary accessories can be rented at the office. Only electric motors are allowed. There's even a convenient place to clean your catch. Of course, a valid state fishing license is required, but five-day licenses are available to residents and non-residents alike.

Lake A. Willis Robertson Recreational Area is open 6 AM to 10 PM from mid-May to mid-September, with spring and fall hours 7 AM to 8 PM. Reservations are accepted with the fee around \$5.00, which includes water and electrical hookup.

To get to Lake Robertson, take State Route 251 from Lexington through Collierstown, veer left on Route 770 to Route 652 and watch for the main entrance signs. Look for the brown and white trailblazer signs that mark the way. For more information, contact the Supervisor, Lake A. Willis Robertson, RFD 2, Box 208A, Lexington, VA 24450 or call (703) 463-4164.

With the completion of the repairs to the dam, plus the constant improvement of the facilities and enhancement of the lake, this "mountain jewel" will continue to be a favorite getaway for Virginians and out-of-state visitors. □

Spike Knuth is a writer/artist with the Department's Education Division.

I haven't always been a pond fisherman. That's another way of saying that I have wasted an awful lot of time. When I think of the miles I have trailered a boat to some distant launch site, passing dozens of very fine ponds every trip, then I realize that I have surely driven by more fish than I will ever catch. It's hard to explain an attitude like the one I had, except in terms of pure snobbery. I guess I got some of it from my father, who considered beneath his notice not only ponds but also lakes, reservoirs, and rivers—unless the rivers had a dollop of salt in them and could at least furnish up a flounder or a gray trout. "I don't fish in mud holes," he once told me. If I remember correctly, the mud hole he was referring to so disdainfully at the time was a 50,000-acre reservoir. It was not, of course, salty. So there's no wonder, with that kind of start, that I should grow up not taking ponds very seriously.

I still like big-water fishing, especially if the water is salty, and I like rivers and streams, too, but I seem to be doing more and more fishing—and quite successful fishing—on waters that are small, easy to reach, and often underfished. Some of these are small lakes, and some are ponds on neighbor's farms or on various wildlife management areas. I have even fished in the water hazards on golf courses. I've come a long way.

The first time I ever fished on a golf course was out of psychological necessity. I was in graduate school in a large Southern city where most people's idea of outdoor sports was tennis on an asphalt court. Hunting and fishing opportunities were limited. During one entire season, the only time I got a gun out of the house was to dissuade four gentlemen from stealing my neighbor's automobile. That was interesting and mildly exciting for a few minutes; it was even a little like deer hunting, in that I had to check my quarry in with an enforcement officer. I decided it couldn't take the place of puttering around in the outdoors, though, even if I had just scored a quadruple without firing a shot! I longed for the basic pleasures: mal-

lards at sunrise; a school of bluefish cutting menhaden; the swirl of a bass near a cypress knee in a lonely coastal river. They were not to be had. Oh, once in a while I might get a little time off and a few dollars together, and I might rent a boat for a day's fishing. Occasions when I had both time and money were fairly rare then, however.

sided bream with dark backs and red bellies and blue-black gill patches. Someone had given me a new fly rod, and I bought a handful of small poppers and began specializing on the bream on subsequent trips. I learned to cast parallel to the bank without getting caught in a bush or a passerby, to watch for errant golf balls when I

Confessions of a Pond Fisherman

It's not such a bad idea to make
a detour on your big lake fishing
trip this year—to the first
pond you come to.

by Steve Ausband

illustrations by Jack Williams

That was why, when a friend suggested we try fishing in the lagoons (that's what he called the golf course ponds, *lagoons*) that surrounded a city park, I was desperate enough to think it a reasonable idea. Sure, the park was square in the middle of the metropolis. Sure, we would be fishing among golfers, joggers, and ladies strolling baby buggies. Still, there were trees hung with Spanish moss along the banks, there were fish in those dark canals and shallow ponds, and we could legally try to catch them. We went fishing.

We caught fish. Lots of fish. We caught crappie and bass and big, slab-

fished near the fairway, and to crawl the bug along a line of cattails or lily pads where bass and bream were lurking. It was not a substitute for renting a boat and going into the heart of darkness, but it was pretty nice. I could take a couple of hours off in the late afternoon, drive over to the park, walk across mowed grass and amid flower beds to reach a favorite fishing hole, and be reasonably certain of at least getting a strike before dark. Except for the joys of being wet, cramped, mosquito-bitten, and sunburned, it was much like any other fishing I had done.

I no longer live where finding a





"... the most memorable trip I had was taking my father-in-law to a secret little pond on a large chunk of farmland in Halifax County."

a large chunk of farmland in Halifax County. Loyd, who is 75 years old now, has a little more trouble getting around in boats than he once had, but he still loves to fish—especially for bream—and my secret pond has the nicest bream I have ever seen anywhere. It was not strenuous fishing, and it was not uncomfortable fishing, but it certainly was productive. On some occasions, I get more pleasure from watching than from fishing, and this was one of those times. Besides, the way Loyd was pulling those thick-bodied little fish out, I didn't need to do any fishing.

Finally, if I am not taking a friend or relative fishing, I like to go alone and enjoy the solitude. There is a four-acre pond—almost a small lake, I suppose—on a wildlife management area very close to my house. On warm summer afternoons I can have my 12-foot aluminum boat on the water and begin stripping line from my fly reel, getting ready for the first cast, just minutes after getting home from work. There are no water skiers, no jet skiers, no partyers on party barges, and wake-makers on the pond. There is no line at the ramp. There are no other boats. Usually there are no other people fishing, though occasionally I share the solitude with a bank fisherman. I'm not sure why the place is always deserted; it is in a beautiful setting, with hardwoods bordering it on three sides and an open grassfield beyond the dam, and it provides fairly dependable fishing for bass and bream. It's a little off the beaten track, though, and I guess most "serious" fishermen bypass it on their way to the reservoir a few miles further down the road. That suits me just fine.

There are good ponds and not-so-good ponds, but almost all of them will produce some respectable fish. Generally, ponds on wildlife management areas are managed to prevent stunting and an overpopulation of small fish. Some farm ponds have an overabundance of little bream, with few or no very large fish. On the other hand, a significant number of the citation-size bass and bream caught every year in Virginia come from private ponds. My Halifax County pond

hunting or fishing spot, or just a spot to walk outdoors, is a problem. There is an interesting river a mile and a half from the house, and in the spring, the big landlocked stripers crowd into it on their spawning run. There are three large reservoirs within an hour's drive and one of them is among the best in the state for bass and crappie. Still, I like ponds. They produce lots of big fish consistently, and they're easy, convenient, and cheap to fish; but those are not the real reasons I enjoy them so. The real reasons are less obvious and more personal.

In the first place, ponds are sort of intimate. You get to know a good pond, to know its shallows and its stick-ups, its deep holes and undercut banks, its shaded shoreline and submerged logs, the way you would get to know a friend. Every pond has its eccentricities and its off or on days, the way people do. Experts on large reservoirs measure water clarity and carefully match plastic worm colors to their dials, but no pond fisherman does. He just learns that the fish hanging around a certain fallen tree like purple worms rigged without a sinker and thrown gently into the submerged branches. But only in the late after-

noon. Earlier in the day, he will concentrate on the brush in the corner by the dam, pulling a small spinnerbait close to the line of shadows made by the willows on shore. He also knows when he's staring futility in the face, and then he'll probably just change ponds for the day. I fish a wildlife management area pond that has good bass and pretty good bream, and a private pond that has outstanding bream and OK bass. They seem to have complementary cycles: when one is "off" the other is frequently "on." I have speculated as to why (different size, configuration, type of surrounding vegetation, water clarity, average depth, topography of surrounding land), but it doesn't really matter. All I really need to know is that if pond "A" isn't producing, I need to pull up stakes and try pond "B."

In the second place, I often like to take friends or relatives fishing. If the friends have small children who are learning to fish, or if the person is getting well up in years, the ponds offer some distinct advantages. Last year I fished for everything from crappie to cobia, but I think the most memorable trip I had was taking my father-in-law to a secret little pond on

vate ponds. My Halifax County pond has produced more bream in the one-pound and over category than any other body of water I have ever fished anywhere. And, I'm talking about real one-pounders here, folks, not the kind which *look* like they just must weigh a pound, or that you describe later as probably weighing a pound. I'm talking about panfish that will not fit in the bottom of a five-gallon bucket without curling a little at the tail! When a bream like that inhales a popping bug and goes broadside to you at the end of 50 feet of fly line, or when it sucks up a cricket suspended near the bottom and heads for a pile of brush, you know immediately that you have found a genuine fishing hole. Bream in fertilized and carefully managed ponds can occasionally reach two pounds, and the vast majority of the really out-sized

bluegills and shellcrackers (reardear sunfish) that have been caught in Virginia and North Carolina—sunfish monsters weighing four pounds or more—have come from ponds. Bass, too, reach bragging size quickly in a good pond. I know of some very ordinary-looking ponds producing fish which, if they were to enter some sort of piscine olympic games, would surely be tested for steroid use.

Ponds are made for those of us who think that flipping a popping bug up close to a lily pad and watching the water explode underneath it as one of life's finest pleasures. Even on windy days, a good pond will often have the right combination of shelter from the wind, fishy water, and good cover to delight a fly-rodder's heart. Most any decent pond has good opportunities for a crankbait or spinnerbait enthusi-

ast, and for the cane pole and bobber set, a pond on a warm afternoon provides the very best in cork watching.

I have found very few farm ponds which do not have some sort of fish in them, and the vast majority can furnish up at least decent fishing for bream and bass. In many ponds, the fishing can be much more than just decent. Besides ordinary bluegills and bass, some ponds have utilized another sunfish species, the redear, commonly called shellcrackers. Channel catfish are also popular fish for stocking in farm ponds. I know of quite a few ponds with crappie in them, but most authorities caution against stocking crappie in unmanaged lakes, since the crappie tend to overpopulate them very quickly, leaving only stunted fish for harvesting.

Obtaining permission to fish a pond on private property is often easier than obtaining permission to hunt. Furthermore, most of the ponds on Virginia's wildlife management areas are open to license holders and provide good fishing. I'm finding that more and more landowners are carefully managing their ponds for public fishing and charging a daily entrance fee. The price is often less than the ramp fee at a lake, and the quality of the fishing is usually very good.

A few weeks from now I'll take a trip to a coastal river, run six miles down the river in my boat, and cast for bass along some cypress knees and near the ribs of an old wrecked boat I found years ago. I plan the same trip every year, and it has become a ritual. Later I'll make a trip or two to the Eastern Shore and to North Carolina's Outer Banks for saltwater fishing. And, of course, I'll hit the reservoirs a few times when the crappie are running and when the bass start up into shallow water. But right now, right this minute, the sun is shining, the wind is light, and I have almost two hours before dark. I'd like to do a little fishing this afternoon, and I know just the pond. I'll be back before dark. Get the grease hot. □

Steve Ausband is the chairman of the English Department of Averett College in Danville, and is a frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife.



"Ponds are made for those of us who think that flipping a popping bug up close to a lily pad and watching the water explode underneath it is one of life's finest pleasures."



The Brown



photo by Spike Knuth

It caught my eye as I crept up on the pool. It wasn't a trophy, but a good 15-incher—full-bodied and well colored. A fine trout resting in its lie, finning effortlessly, kicking its caudal fin occasionally—just enough to correct its position. Facing into the current, it hadn't detected my approach from behind and below.

The sun favored me. No shadows on the peaceful pool. For once I seemed to hold all of the cards, and believe me, you need them if you're to outwit a crafty old brown.

Now if I could put it all together.

There was limited room for my back cast—a little cramped. But I could manage. I wanted to drop that tiny dry fly just right, a bit upstream from the resting trout, and in the right

current to carry it to the fish. I had a hunch the brown was being highly selective at the moment, not inclined to go much out of its way to pick a tidbit of food off the top. I had to do it just right. A heavy cast, a sloppy one, would send that fish scurrying.

I made a couple of false casts and then shot the fly toward the selected spot. Bingo! For once, I was right on target. I watched enchanted as the dainty fly danced with the current toward the fish. Now! But nothing happened. Had I failed in my effort to outwit the fish? Or was it just not interested?

Try again.

And just how often could I make a near perfect presentation? Four casts, four drifts later, nothing had changed.

The brown was still there—unperturbed. Finning lazily. Seemingly oblivious to my best efforts.

But then, a couple of casts later, the fly drifted once more toward the fish. And I saw it change position! Rise slowly toward the surface! A sudden gasp behind me told me I had a spectator. A fellow angler, working upstream had spotted me, recognized the duel between me and the fine trout, and kept a safe distance.

It wasn't a dramatic strike. No eruption of the quiet pool. The brown simply rose slowly to the surface and sucked in the fly. But a ruckus did develop when I set the hook! The stranger let out a war whoop, and I hung on as the embattled brown dove for cover.

A Trout for all Philosophies

Some call him the king of trout in Virginia. Bob Gooch tells you where to find him, how to fish for him, and what your chances are of catching him!

by Bob Gooch

That wasn't the first brown I had caught in many years of chasing the fish. Nor the last. But for some reason that experience remains vivid in my heavily burdened memory bank.

Taking a brown trout on dry flies must be the epitome of trout fishing. Or is it? There are some fine anglers out there who will challenge that statement. Some are natural bait experts who specialize in taking big browns. Dry fly fishermen and natural bait enthusiasts are at the opposite ends of the spectrum. Given the opportunity, both can build strong cases for their approaches to catching browns.

And that's one of the joys of fishing for the brown trout. It is a trout for a variety of angling philosophies.

I recall reading a fishing story back in my formative years, one in a tattered outdoor magazine making the circuit among boyhood friends, a story about an Old Country immigrant enjoying his first American fishing trip. The brown trout stream he had discovered helped ease the pangs of homesickness. That's because the brown is a native of Europe, an exciting exotic introduced to American waters many years ago—possibly by some other immigrant desiring to bring a taste of the Old Country to his adopted home.

In any event, the new American angler I was reading about, dressed in Old World attire and carrying the quaint tackle of his native country, came upon several anglers knotted around a pool.

"Good brown down there, but we can't get it to hit," said one of the puzzled anglers.

Though his grasp of the English language was still limited, the immigrant recognized the problem. He suprisingly produced a tiny live mouse, which he tied to his hook. He then picked up a chip of wood, placed the hook and mouse on the chip and put the chip in the current on a course that would float it over the reluctant brown. Just as the chip approached the fish, he twitched the tip of his rod and flipped the mouse into the water. It hit the water and struggled toward shore, but . . . I needn't finish the story.

I don't know any anglers who use mice to take brown trout, but plenty of them fish with other natural baits



The brown adapts to all types of fishing—from the flyfishing purist on the Smith River to the spin-fisherman taking advantage of the action on Opening Day; photo by Bob Gooch.



such as crayfish, hellgrammites, minnows, and worms. And they catch trout. Big browns. Just visit the Tye River on opening day and note the number of fishermen with minnow pails or worm cans.

And when I speak of natural baits I'm not thinking of cheese, corn, or even canned salmon eggs. Anglers fishing minnows, worms, and other natural baits will outfish the cheese and corn dunkers when browns are the predominant trout.

A wide variety of spinning lures will also take browns. Minnowlike lures such as Rapalas and Rebels are good, particularly for the larger fish. But browns are also taken on Mepps, Panther/Martins, Roostertails, and other spinner-fly combination lures. And

small spoons can be productive.

Fly fishermen working nymphs, streamers, and wet flies take their share of browns. Streamers represent minnows and those that most closely match the native bait fish are probably the best. The various marabous and muddlers are good.

So there you have it. Chose the kind of angling you prefer and there are brown trout out there to take you on.

Over the seasons I've taken brown trout by just about every conceivable fishing method—and I'm not sure I have a favorite. Natural baits are good early in the season when the water is often high and roily. Later in the spring or early summer, I'm usually torn between spinning lures and wet flies. Much depends upon the stream and

how crowded it might be. On small brush-lined streams, finding room for a back cast can be a problem—and I don't relish the thought of hooking a fellow angler in the ear. And, of course, there is May with its placid pools that fairly yell, "dry flies."

Guess that makes me a jackleg. I get by with all methods, but am an expert at none. But I do enjoy them all. In the final analysis that's what it's all about.

But, a variety of fishing methods isn't the only option the brown trout offers.

Are you looking for trout that leaps spectacularly, one that crashes the surface and tailwalks across a stream, or one that fights running and twisting below the surface? If it's the first you want, then concentrate on the colorful rainbow, but if you're looking for a



no-holds-barred battle in the depths, go for the brown trout. Sure, the brown will jump occasionally, but it is not as predictable in that respect as is the rainbow. Browns caught on dry flies seem more likely to leap than those taken deep. And those that hit in the shallows may jump simply because of the lack of fighting space.

If you want a trophy trout to hang on your wall, by all means go for the buster brown. The largest trout ever caught in Virginia was an 18-pound, 11-ounce brown taken from the Smith River in 1979. And under the revised record plan that went into effect in 1985, the brown trout still holds the lead with a 12-pound, 13-ounce fish taken from the Middle Fork of the Holston River in July of that year. A

12-pound, 9-ounce rainbow is close behind, but it was caught in a private pond. Catching a trophy brown trout in Virginia waters is well within grasp of any angler who works at it.

For years, the Smith River below Philpott Lake was Virginia's best brown trout water, the water that produced trophy fish and state records. It is still good, but in recent years Lake Moomaw has forged ahead to challenge this popular trout stream. There are also other good brown trout waters scattered across the western part of the state.

The Smith River, a cold tailwater stream, is stocked with brown trout as well as with brooks and rainbows. There is also a special section of the stream that is limited to artificial lures

with single hooks and with a creel limit of two and a minimum size limit of 16 inches. It's a good stream on which to go trophy hunting for big browns.

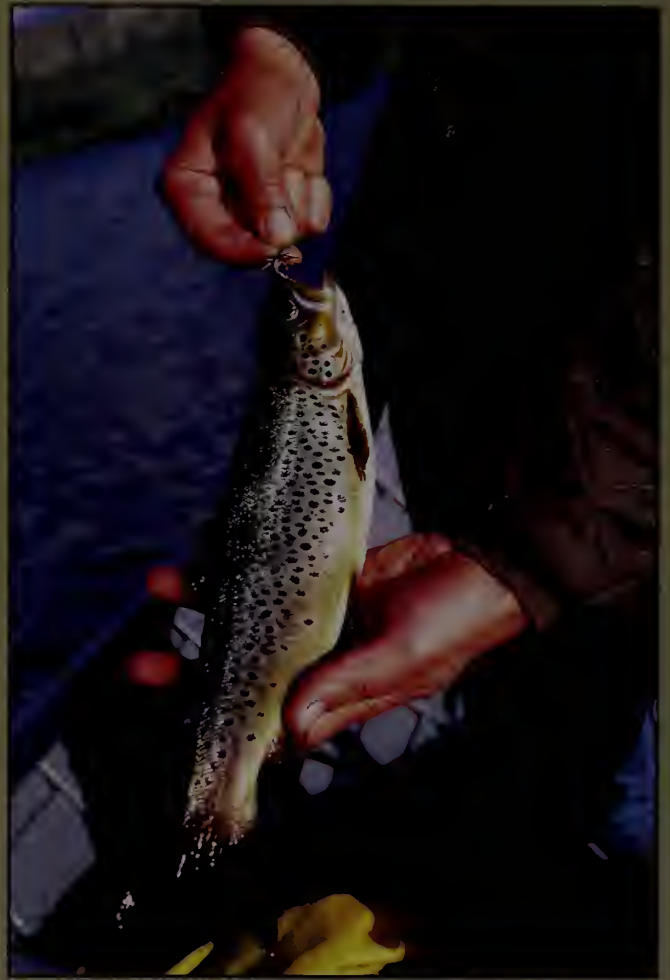
Lake Moomaw has come on so strong as a brown trout fishery in recent seasons, that by far the largest number of citations are being reported from that mountain lake. And since the lake is open all year, it is a good winter brown trout fishery. Some of the largest browns are caught near the dam within sight of the visitor's center.

Philpott and South Holston lakes are also open to trout fishing all year. Neither is noted for browns, though both give up a few every season.

In addition to Lake Moomaw and Smith River, other good brown trout waters include the Bullpasture, Pedlar,



Brown trout in Virginia can be taken on natural bait, spinning lures or flies. You pick the method—the brown trout obliges; photo by Bob Gooch.



Roanoke, and Tye Rivers, and Big Stony, Potts, and Tinker Creeks.

Other waters that have given up citation browns in recent seasons include Douthat, Elk Horn, Flannagan, Gatewood, Hales, Robertson, Sherwood, Smith Mountain, and Wilkins Lakes; the Dan, Jackson, Little, Maury, Middle Fork of the Holston, New, South, South Fork of the Holston, and the South Fork of the Shenandoah Rivers; Back, Bear, Big Reed Island, Big Tumbling, Cedar, Cripple, Crooked, Fox, Jennings, Laurel Fork, Mill, and Stony Creeks, and Roaring Run. Not all are likely brown trout waters, however. I wouldn't recommend that anyone fish that South Fork of the Shenandoah River for brown trout—big or little. Numerous good trout streams feed the popular smallmouth bass river, how-

ever, and apparently a good brown just drifted downstream. Smallmouth bass and brown trout sometimes share the same waters.

The brown trout is more tolerant of water quality, incidentally, than the brook or rainbow. That's why you sometimes find them in fast smallmouth bass streams . . . I've caught brown bass in the trout waters of the Tye River.

We've talked about how and where to catch brown trout, but what about the best time of year—the best fishing season?

March, April, May, and June are top months in Lake Moomaw and other good brown trout waters. March just might be the best of all, but the season doesn't open until the third Saturday of the month on many good waters. A

few browns are taken every month of the year, however.

Despite the brown's many fans, it's probably the dry fly fisherman, the purist, who appreciates the fish most. The native brookie is also a favorite of dry fly anglers, but big ones are rare in Virginia. The historical record is only 4 pounds, 2 ounces. A nice trout, but it doesn't approach the 18-pound, 11-ounce brown taken from the Smith River back in the late 1970s.

Other fishing methods are fun and productive, but tossing a March Brown or a Gordon Quill to a lurking brown on a balmy May day is the kind of fishing that dreams are made of.

It just doesn't get any better. □

Bob Gooch is an outdoor newspaper columnist and author of several books on hunting and fishing. He lives in Troy, near Charlottesville.

More Pounds to the Ounce



Throughout Virginia's history, man has always been in pursuit of fish as a food source, and later for trade or barter. Historically speaking, the last decade has displayed some very excellent management tools to help maintain and increase our fisheries—especially our sport fisheries. In doing so, the state also found a viable means to efficiently record and retrieve data for even more effective fisheries management.

One of these was the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Freshwater Citation Awards Program. In 1963 the Department initiated the program as a way of monitoring fish populations and growth in their stocking program. A committee set minimum weights for each "trophy" fish entry in the program, and anglers participating received a diploma-type award.

During 1963, a total of 267 diplomas were issued to anglers participating in the program. As years passed, more and more sportsmen began to support the program and eagerly await the arrival of their diplomas.

Over the years, the diplomas have been upgraded to a plaque showing the type fish caught, date of catch, angler's name, species, and hand-painted weights. A plaque is awarded to every angler catching his first citation-size fish for a species. Thereafter, for the same species, the angler is awarded a bar with two hooks to hang under his

plaque. Anglers catching citation fish in five different categories are awarded a Master Angler patch. Catching 10 of the same species entitles the angler to the Department's Expert Angler Award.

At the end of 1988, a total of 10,240 applications were entered and processed by anglers registering their "trophies" by submitting their applications.

The Freshwater Citation Awards Program has been refined over the years, and last year, in an effort to bring fish into the program that more accurately reflect "trophy" status, the Citation Committee made the following changes which will become effective July 1, 1989:

Spotted bass—dropped from citation program, but left in State Record program

Largemouth bass—8.0 pounds (no change)

Smallmouth bass—raised from 4.0 to 5.0 pounds

Crappie—2.0 pounds (no change)

Rock bass—1.0 pounds (no change)

Roanoke bass—included in State Record program but not recognized in citation program

Sunfish—1.0 pound (no change)

White bass—raised from 2.0 to 2.5 pounds

Hybrid striped bass—dropped from program

Striped bass—raised from 15.0 to 20.0 pounds

White perch—1.0 pound (no change)

Channel catfish—raised from 10.0 to 12.0 pounds

Blue catfish—raised from 15.0 to 20.0 pounds

Flathead catfish—raised from 15.0 to 25.0 pounds

Rainbow trout—raised from 3.0 to 4.0 pounds

Brown trout—raised from 4.0 to 5.0 pounds

Brook Trout—2.0 pounds (no change)

Chain pickerel—4.0 pounds (no change)

Muskie—raised from 10.0 to 15.0 pounds

Northern pike—6.0 pounds (no change)

Walleye—raised from 4.0 to 5.0 pounds

Yellow perch—1.0 pound (no change)

Gar—10.0 pounds (no change)

Bowfin—10.0 pounds (no change)

Carp—raised from 15.0 to 20.0 pounds

Anglers are encouraged to continue to participate in the popular program. Processing of awards takes approximately six weeks. Further information can be obtained by contacting the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, 4010 West Broad, Richmond, VA 23230-1104.

April Journal

Mount Rogers Naturalist Rally May 5-6

The 15th annual Mount Rogers Naturalist Rally will be held Friday and Saturday, May 5-6, in Konnarock, Virginia. Sponsored by the United States Forest Service, the Mount Rogers Citizens Development Corporation, and the Naturalist Rally Committee, the Rally will feature guest speaker Doug Ogle of Virginia Highlands Community College lecturing on the unique geology, botany, and wildlife habitat of the Mount Rogers area of Southwest Virginia. Approximately 20 field trips will be led by recognized experts in the fields of botany, geology, ornithology, and other areas. There will also be hikes to the top of Mount Rogers, the highest mountain in Virginia, and a special expedition by horseback. The Rally will be of special interest to birdwatchers, students of natural history, nature photographers, and geologists, as well as anyone who enjoys the study of wildlife and the outdoors. The registration fee is \$2.50, plus \$5 for the home-cooked meal that accompanies Ogle's lecture on Friday, May 5. For more information or to register, write Carrie Sparks, Naturalist Rally Registrar, 301 Look Avenue, Marion, VA 24354. □

Virginia's Endangered Species Symposium and Workshop

On April 28 and 29, scientists from around the state will gather at VPI & SU in Blacksburg to share the latest information on Virginia's threatened and endangered plants and animals. At this workshop and symposium, which is open to the public, scientists will review and rank species in order to help planners, local governments, and state officials understand the status and management needs of our troubled

species. Proceedings of the meeting will be available sometime next year.

Sponsored by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Historic Resources, this symposium will update the information and status of species presented 10 years ago at the landmark 1978 symposium.

Those interested in the future of Virginia's endangered and threatened species are encouraged to attend this workshop, and must register for the conference at the door or by writing the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Attn: Endangered Species Symposium, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. For more information, call (804) 367-1000. □

Another New Lake Opens

Fauquier County Parks and Recreation Department has announced the opening of a new fishing lake. Germantown Lake, a 109-acre multi-use impoundment, opened for fishing on March 4, 1989. The lake is located in C.M. Crockett Park just off Route 643 (Meetze Road) in Fauquier County.

The lake has a concession facility complete with drinks, snacks, bait and tackle. There is a public boat ramp, and rental boats and electric motors are available.

The lake was stocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, and channel catfish. Fish biologist Ed Steinkoenig reports that the fish population is in good shape, and fishing should be excellent in the lake this year. Large numbers of fishermen are expected to use the lake this spring. To protect the largemouth bass, a special size and creel limit will be in effect. Bass less than 15 inches in length cannot be creel, and only two fish per

fish per day may be taken.

For further information about Germantown Lake, contact C.M. Crockett Park at (703) 788-4867, or the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries at (703) 899-4169. □

Bird Dog Training Seminar Scheduled

On May 19, 20, and 21, the legendary bird dog trainer Delmar Smith will be offering a two-day and three night seminar on bird dog training at Oakland Shooting Preserve in Orange County. The seminar, the only one being offered in Virginia this year, is an intensive, hands-on course, with participants working their own dogs under Delmar's supervision. The course covers the basics of field training a bird dog, from yard training to bird work to field trialing a gun dog. Participants will learn first-hand the techniques that have proven successful for the five-time winner of both the National Open and the U.S. Open Brittany championships, while being exposed to the gentle humor and wisdom of a man who is not only a grand dog trainer, but an incomparable teacher of dogs and men. The seminar is open to anyone with an interest in training their gun dog without harsh words or hands. For information on fees and registration, contact the Lahore Bird Dog Club, David Pomfret, Box 1265, Orange, VA 22960, (703) 854-4540. □

Migratory Fish Passage Information Available

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) has published a 6-page circular, *Chesapeake Bay: Removing Impediments to Migratory Fishes*, available at no charge from the Foundation.

Thousands of miles of fish spawn-

ing habitat on Chesapeake Bay tributaries are currently blocked by dams, culverts, and other obstructions, and restoring these fisheries are a vital component of the 1987 Chesapeake Bay Agreement. Hopefully, the recommendations contained in the pamphlet, among others, will be used by the states to develop workable plans to remove these impediments.

Produced with assistance from the Chesapeake Bay Program's Living Resources Subcommittee and the EPA Chesapeake Bay Liaison Office in Annapolis, the document was printed with assistance from the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust.

For copies, write CBF, Suite 815, Heritage Building, 1001 E. Main St. Richmond, VA 23219. □

Letters

Hats Off to PEC

I would like to say that the article in the February issue by Nancy Hugo entitled "Challenging the Bulldozers" was right on target. I, like most everybody I know, hate to see the urban sprawl that is paving over natural areas. My hometown of Greenbelt, Maryland, could now be renamed Graybelt because of the development that is occurring everywhere in the D.C. area.

I applaud the Piedmont Environmental Council's effort to control development in that region of the state. I believe that the Council is so successful because they know they can't stop development, just control and confine it. I just wish there was an organization formed like it 20 years ago in Maryland. If there was, Greenbelt might still be worthy of its name.

Keep up the good work on your excellent magazine! I look forward to every issue.

Joe Tousignant
Blacksburg

The article, "Challenging the Bulldozers," in your February issue was for me, a light in the darkness. Maybe something can really be done to stop growth and "progress," or at least limit and confine it.

I suggest that the Department find some way to print many thousands of this article for wide distribution. Maybe the Virginia Environmental Endowment Fund would help.

I would like a reprint of Ms. Hugo's article mailed to every rural landowner in Virginia, and to every planner, supervisor, council member, school teacher; in other words to everyone in positions of authority or influence.

While I have your attention, may I make two suggestions for future articles?

Here in the Valley, it is shameful how landowners treat streams. So often the banks are devoid of vegetation, and flood waters gorge into the banks causing soil loss and sedimentation down stream. Cattle constitute a big part of the problem. An article showing the advantages of wildlife cover along streams might plant some seeds in landowners' minds.

Another article might stress the benefits of fencing woodlands to keep cattle out. Wildlife and cattle just don't mix. And neither do wildflowers and shrubs mix with cattle. Trees suffer too.

Thank you for *Virginia Wildlife*. Keep up the good work.

McKelden Smith, M.D.
Staunton

Nancy Hugo may be a hero! Hats off to the Piedmont Environmental Council! "Challenging the Bulldozers" may very well prove to be a cornerstone in building a philosophy in regard to development.

I encourage all readers to spread the word that man and nature can live together—but man has to take his active role in helping nature to survive. We certainly can see the frightening trend, but trends can change.

Let us all seek out our elected and

appointed officials to let them know that we are for conservation of wildlife, natural resources, and rural areas. Procrastination could be our greatest enemy in establishing a plan of action for our future generations of man, animals and plants. Please do not straddle the fence on this issue!

Doug Rinker
Frederick County
Planning Commission
Winchester

Boating Safety

While examining boats, I have asked a lot of people if they carry an anchor. Most do, but once in a while someone will say, "Who needs one?" The answer is, everyone does. It might be used to ride out a storm in heavy seas, or to keep the boat in place while repairs are made on a motor. If there is temporary motor trouble, or some other problem, an anchor is great to keep the boat from drifting out to sea or into some area which is congested, rocky, shallow or otherwise troublesome.

Anchors come in various weights and shapes. For all around use, the lightweight anchor with sharp flukes, known as a patent anchor, is best. It features large-area flukes which bury easily and provide the maximum holding power per pound of anchor. The mushroom anchor, so called because it resembles a mushroom, is widely used, but impractical because it must be fully silted in to hold at all well, a process which could take many weeks. The most important thing, after selection of an anchor, is the scope, or length of anchor line. It is wise to attach an average of four or five feet of chain to the anchor, then attach the anchor line to the end of the chain. The chain will keep the line on the bottom and help the anchor to dig in. The anchor line should be long enough to compensate for the water depth. A good rule is five to seven feet of anchor line for every foot of water in which you wish to anchor. The longer the

April Journal

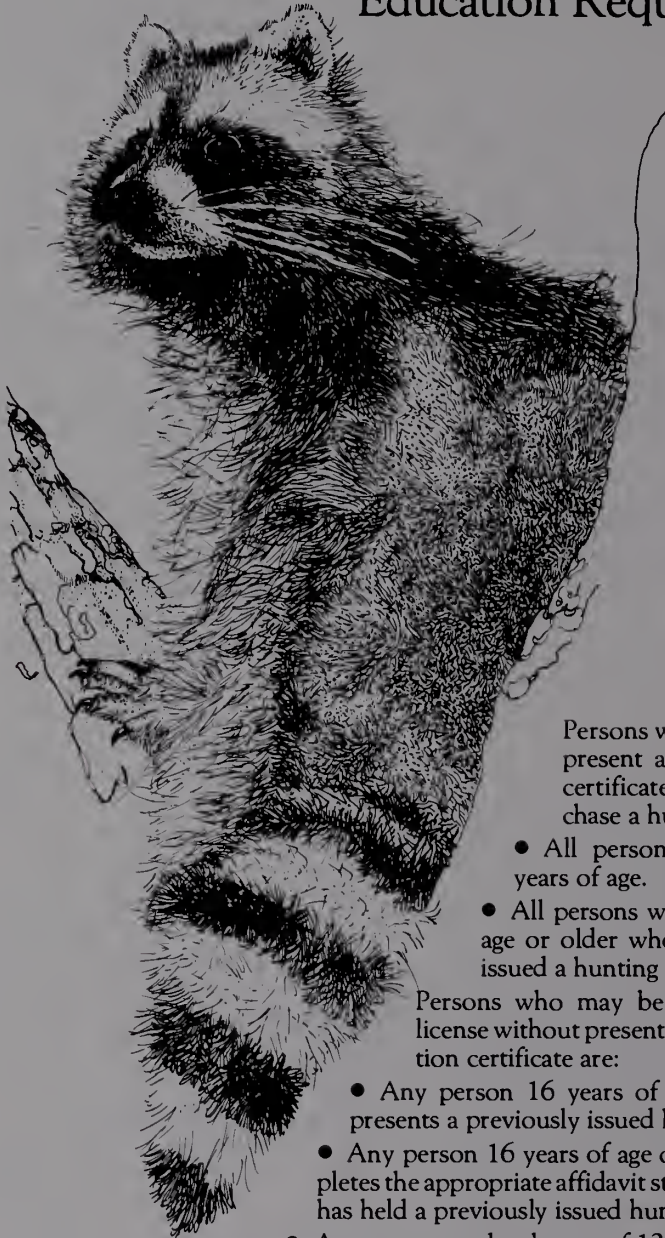
line, the more horizontal pull results, with greater anchoring security. This is most important in strong winds and current.

The anchor should be lowered, not heaved, and the one end should be fastened to the anchor and the other end should be secured to the boat. This may sound elementary, but a friend of mine lowered my anchor and the end was not secured. Consequently, I saw my anchor and line disappear forever. When about to anchor, head into the wind, lower the anchor and then back down until the line tightens. Hold the anchor line in your hands and give it a good tug. If the anchor is not holding, try again. The wind may change later on, and the boat may swing around in another direction. If this happens, tug on the line to see if the anchor is still fast. When it is time to retrieve the anchor, it may refuse to come up. A good method is to go forward until you are right over the anchor, then keep on going a little more until you are pulling on the anchor in the opposite direction from your anchored position. This reversal of pull should extricate the flukes and release the anchor.

Anchor by the bow. The bow offers least resistance to wind and current, and is built to take the waves. Never anchor by the stern. The stern is lower and its relatively flat surface causes extreme pull on the anchor and invites water to come aboard.

Nylon line is best because of its ability to stretch. Because of its strength and elasticity, open laid nylon (not braided) is best. If you have a 12-pound anchor, use 3/8-inch line. If you have a 20-pound anchor, use 7/16-inch. If the anchor weighs 35 pounds, use 1/2-inch. For other weight anchors, match your line accordingly. It is better to have a line which is stronger than necessary, rather than one which is too weak. In bad weather, two anchors, both lines fastened to the bow and spaced wide apart, are a good idea.—William Antozzi, Boating Safety Officer

Mandatory Hunter Education Requirements



Persons who are required to present a hunter education certificate in order to purchase a hunting license are:

- All persons who are 12-15 years of age.
- All persons who are 16 years of age or older who have never been issued a hunting license.

Persons who may be issued a hunting license without presenting a hunter education certificate are:

- Any person 16 years of age or older who presents a previously issued hunting license.**
- Any person 16 years of age or older who completes the appropriate affidavit stating that he or she has held a previously issued hunting license.
- Any person under the age of 12.*

* The law requires youngsters (under the age of 12) to be accompanied and directly supervised by a parent, legal guardian or an adult designated by the parent or guardian while hunting.

** Virginia accepts and recognizes all states' and countries' hunting licenses and hunter education credentials. This may be in the form of an identification card or certificate.

Hunter education courses are held free of charge throughout the Commonwealth at various times of the day and night and weekends. These 10-hour courses satisfy the mandatory hunter education requirement, and information on courses in your area can be obtained from your game warden or by contacting the VA Game Department at 1-800-252-7717.

Biologists Say The Funniest Things

If you should have an opportunity to sit in on a conference of fisheries biologists, you might hear some unusual words being bantered about. Words like "anadromous," "forage base," or "recruitment." These words can be a little confusing or mysterious to us, but if we take the time to learn what they mean, it will help us to understand the profession and purpose of fisheries management.

Two terms you'll frequently hear fish biologists use concerning fish are "anadromous" and "pelagic." Anadromous comes from the Greek word meaning "running upward." It is used to describe fish that run from the sea (or a large body of water), up freshwater rivers and streams. Striped bass, shad and herring are anadromous fish and recently the first steps were taken to allow the species to run up the James River beyond Richmond, something they haven't done for 150 years! Dams have been stopping them, but now those low dams are having openings blasted in them to allow the fish passage through to their historical spawning grounds.

The word "pelagic" also comes from the Greek and means "of, or pertaining to ocean; oceanic." In modern usage, the word pelagic is applied to fish that live and roam about in deep, open water. The striped bass is both anadromous and pelagic.

Another term you might hear a fish biologist utter is the term "forage base." Fisheries biologist Ed Steinkoenig of Fredericksburg tells us that Webster's definition of forage is: 'food for animals especially when taken by browsing or grazing.' "In the fish world," says Steinkoenig, "the forage or food base for most newly hatched fish is comprised largely of microscopic plants, animals and bacteria. As fish grow, their diets usually change, which causes a shift from one forage (or food type) to another. The most

Family Outdoors

by Spike Knuth



Largemouth bass—a carnivore in the food chain underwater; photo by Doug Stamm.

important food items for most fish are insects (in their aquatic or larval stages and other aquatic invertebrates such as worms, snails or crayfish.)"

Steinkoenig tells us that bluegills eat insects and decaying plants throughout their life. Aquatic insects, crustaceans and plants in a given lake constitute their forage base. Largemouth bass and other carnivorous species—walleyes, northern pike, striped bass

and muskie—shift from insects, as they grow, to fish or other meat. Their forage base consists mainly of smaller bluegills, shad, minnows and other small fish. However, an abundance of crayfish or frogs also constitutes a forage base for carnivores, says Steinkoenig. Smallmouth bass, for example, may depend on crayfish and aquatic insects as their forage base. Trout in our streams depend heavily on a variety of insects as their forage base while redear sunfish in our lakes feed off the bottom on snails and clams. Shad consume plankton throughout their life and in turn provide the forage base for most of our carnivorous species in our big reservoirs along with alewives—especially for striped bass. Steinkoenig tells us too, that some fish, like grass carp and certain minnows are herbivores, feeding exclusively on plants.

When you hear a biologist speaking of forage base, he is referring to the main food source available to a specific species of fish in a specific body of water. "In general," Steinkoenig says, "the simple life forms (one-celled plants and animals) form the 'base' and the food chain builds from there."

A biologist may often also talk about low or poor, or good "recruitment." When fish hatch and grow, they are "recruited" into the overall population. "As immature fish reach sexual maturity, they are 'recruited' into the 'reproducing' stock," says Regional Supervising Fish Biologist, Mitchell Norman. "As small fish grow to catchable size, they are recruited into the harvestable stock." Several factors can affect recruitment. The number, size and condition of the spawning adults has an effect, as do environmental factors such as low water, floods and temperatures. Predation and competition, species competing for the same space and food also affect recruitment. This makes predicting recruitment very difficult. Simply put, "recruitment is the addition of fish (of any size) to a population or stock," says Norman. □

Virginia's Wildlife

Must say I've always taken some pride in not having a morbid fear of ticks. Can't say that I liked them much, but I never shrank from pulling them off the way some folks do. The more I learn about ticks, however, the more I realize a healthy fear of ticks might not be such a bad thing. There were 29 cases of Lyme's disease reported in Virginia last year and 18 cases of Rocky Mountain spotted fever—both tick-borne diseases. That's hardly an epidemic, but it's serious enough to merit caution in the way we deal with ticks.

It's the American dog tick, *Dermacentor variabilis*, that carries Rocky Mountain spotted fever. The deer tick, *Ixodes dammini*, and sometimes the Lone Star Tick, *Amblyomma americanum*, carry Lyme's disease. All of these are 3-host ticks, which means that they take blood meals from three hosts at different stages in their life cycles. At any one of these stages—larva, nymph, and adult, they may use man as a host.

The activity of the American dog tick begins in early spring when both overwintering adults and six-legged larval ticks emerge. These larval ticks usually use a white-footed mouse or other small rodent as a host, and it is there that the tick larva feeds for three to eight days or until it becomes engorged with blood. (Only the females become greatly enlarged when engorged.) Once engorged, the tick larva drops off, shelters in vegetation, leaf litter, or the forest floor, and sheds its skin.

The emergent nymphal tick (sometimes called a seed tick) has eight legs and must seek another host, usually a small rodent or mammal. Peak activity of this stage of the American dog tick in Virginia is May or early June. Once engorged, the nymphs drop off their hosts, molt, and emerge as adults. These adults, most active during late June or early July, seek a third host, usually a medium to large-sized mammal (like a man, a dog, a raccoon, or a fox) where they also feed until engorged. If the adult female has mated

The Tick

by
Nancy Hugo
photo by
Robert C. Simpson

Opposite: *Dermacentor variabilis*

before she feeds, this will be her last meal, because she dies after dropping off and laying thousands of eggs.

The activity of the American dog tick usually stops around the end of August, but you can't count on finding the outdoors tick-free after that. There are over a dozen species of ticks in Virginia, and each one has a different life cycle. The tiny deer tick, for example, is active as late as October, and the male Lone Star tick is also active in the fall. Brown dog ticks, the ticks most common to dogs, are active all year in the homes and kennels where they're usually found, but they don't usually use humans as hosts.

The best defense against ticks—short of never leaving a tick-free home—is to prevent their reaching

you by dressing appropriately and to remove them promptly if they do reach your skin. Long-sleeved shirts, and long pants tucked into boots are recommended. Some outdoorsmen even tape the top of their boots to their trousers to deny ticks entry there. Commercial preparations containing Deet (Diethyl toluamide) are also effective in repelling ticks for several hours.

Carefully examining clothing and the body will also often reveal ticks before they've had a chance to attach themselves to the body. If you do find a tick attached to the skin, prompt removal is essential to minimize the risk of disease. Of all the methods of removal that have been recommended—including using a lighted match to make the tick voluntarily withdraw its head, covering it with petroleum jelly or nail polish, or swabbing it with rubbing alcohol, none has been found by experts to be more successful than manual removal with fingers, forceps, or tweezers. You should grasp the tick as close as possible to the skin and pull steadily with even pressure. Tick expert Daniel Sonenshine also recommends a gentle twist. Jerking can cause the mouth parts to break off in the skin. It does make sense to try to avoid handling a tick with your bare hands since disease carrying organisms may be present in the ticks feces on the outside of his body. Shield your hand with a tissue or remove the tick with tweezers if you can.

Symptoms of Lyme's disease include a skin rash in the area of the tick bite, a flu-like fever and chills, a stiff neck, muscle aches, and general lethargy. Transitory pain in swollen joints, called "Lyme arthritis," develops later if Lyme's disease goes untreated. Symptoms of Rocky Mountain spotted fever include headache, fever, malaise, and sometimes a skin rash, often beginning on the forearms. Both diseases respond to treatment once diagnosed, so care and caution should protect us from even the worst ticks have to offer. □



